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Adventure

OCTOBER

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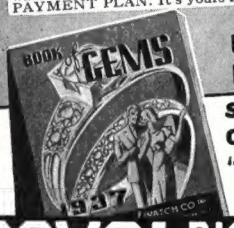

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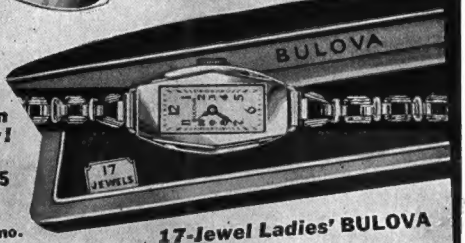

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Adventure

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Radio already gives good jobs to more than 300,000 people. And in 1936, Radio enjoyed one of its most prosperous years. More than $500,000,000 worth of sets, tubes and parts were sold—an increase of more than 60% over 1935. Over a million Auto Radios were sold, a big increase over 1935. 24,000,000 homes now have one or more Radio sets, and more than 4,000,000 autos are Radio equipped. Every year millions of these sets go out of date and are replaced with newer models. More millions need servicing, new tubes, repairs, etc. A few hundred $30, $50, $75 a week jobs have grown to thousands in 20 years. And Radio is still a new industry—growing fast!

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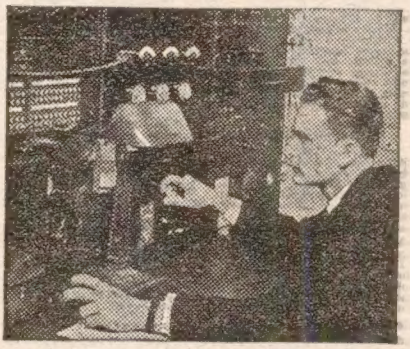

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LOST TRAILS

Luella Winans Campbell, Las Cruces, New Mexico, wants word of relatives of late Major Ira Winans, Rochester, New York, or relatives of Walter Winans, Baltimore, Md.

Where is Robert Pinkerton of 131st Company, U. S. Marine Artillery, Quantico, Va., 1917-1919? His friend Thomas P. Jordan, 1523 N. Main Ave., Scranton, Pa., queries.

William L. Harcus, Kerrville, Texas, wants news of his brother Henry (Harry) L. Harcus, Kansas City, Mo., fearing abrupt end of correspondence in 1922 meant sudden death.

Wolffe W. Roberts, Box 56, Amherst, N. H., wants word of Frank R. (Jack) Frost, last heard from at Oakland, Calif.

Richard J. Lutz, R. D. 1, Verona, Pa., would like to hear of Frank Fittante. They were marines at Quantico in 1926, when Lutz was ordered to China and Fittante to Nicaragua.

Anyone in D. Company, 15th U.S. Infantry, that went to China in 1912, or anyone in the Band of the 2nd Battalion, South Wales Borderers, in China 1913, 1914—write Pennock S. Broomall, 216 West 5th St., Chester, Pa.

Frank Merteul, care The Billboard, 25-27, Opera Place, Cincinnati, Ohio, wants word of a wartime friend, James (Roughhouse Jim) Novak, grenadier, voltigeur, 10th Company, First Regiment, French Foreign Legion in 1918; later transferred into Czechoslovak legion in France; last heard from 1925-1926 camping at Caddo Lake in northern Louisiana trying to recover his health.

A letter has come from Pendleton, Bangkok, Siam, for Capt. R. W. van Raven. Who knows Capt. van Raven's address?

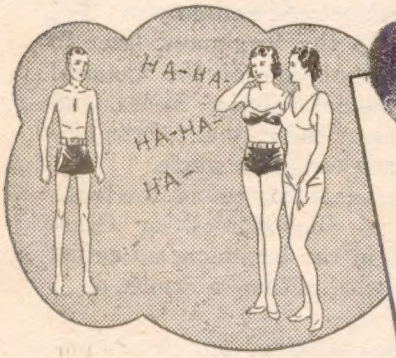
Word wanted of Hamilton Redfield Norvell, sometimes called "Reddy" or "Curley," by his brother Stevens Thompson Norvell, 4449 Howard Ave., Western Springs, Ill. Their father died on Dec. 30, 1936. Norvell lived in Cincinnati until 1932, went to Southern Ontario.

Clarence Bailey, Cherryvale, Kansas, seeks news of Wylie Boss Smith, who sailed as oiler in June, 1934, from New Orleans on S. S. Point Salinas.

Otho Amos Duckwiler, formerly of Roanoke, Va., joined U. S. Army in 1914. Stationed Texas City, Texas, in 1914. Transferred to Field Artillery stationed Canal Zone 1918, 1919. His sister has died, and her daughter, Virginia Pulewich, 10 East 109 St., New York City, wants to get in touch with him.

Charles W. Cantrell, 8231 Germantown Ave., Philadelphia, wants word of Lieut. John Lewin and O'Neil Sivere, who were with him in a filibuster expedition to Cuba shortly before the Spanish American War.

THE GIRLS LAUGHED AT HIS SKINNY FORM!



Irvin Echard

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New IRONIZED YEAST gives thousands 10 TO 25 POUNDS *in a few weeks!*

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Scientists have discovered that many are thin and rundown simply because they do not get enough yeast vitamins (Vitamin B) and iron in their daily food. One of the richest sources of marvelous health-building Vitamin B is the special yeast used in making English ale, world-renowned for its medicinal properties.

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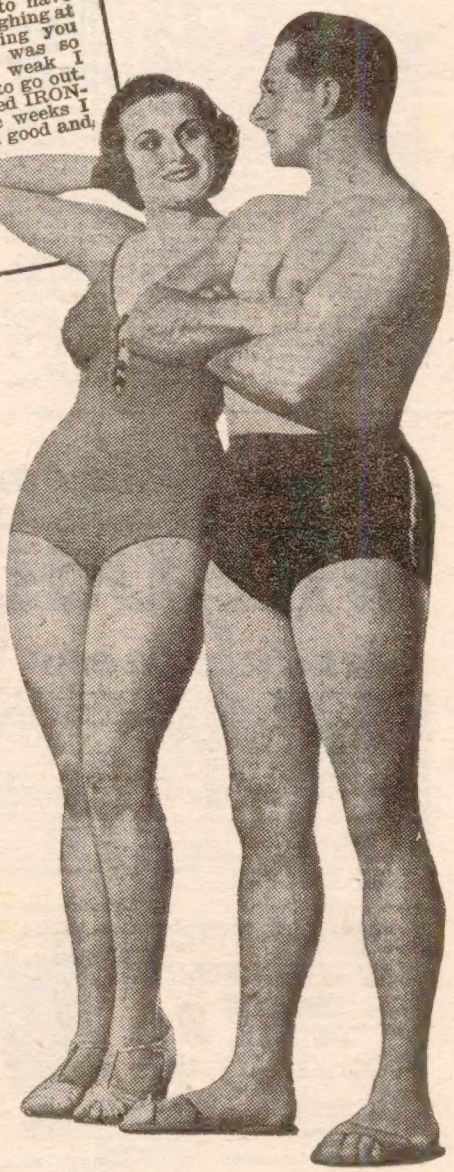

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Name.....

Present Position.....

Address.....

LONG KNIVES

By Arthur Woodward

OF ALL the names applied to the early frontiersmen, and later to all of the Americans, there is none that is more picturesque than that of the Long Knives.

For more than two hundred years that name clung to the Virginians, later to the entire population of the Colonial and post-Colonial frontier States, and finally it became the epithet for the new nation of Americans as a whole.

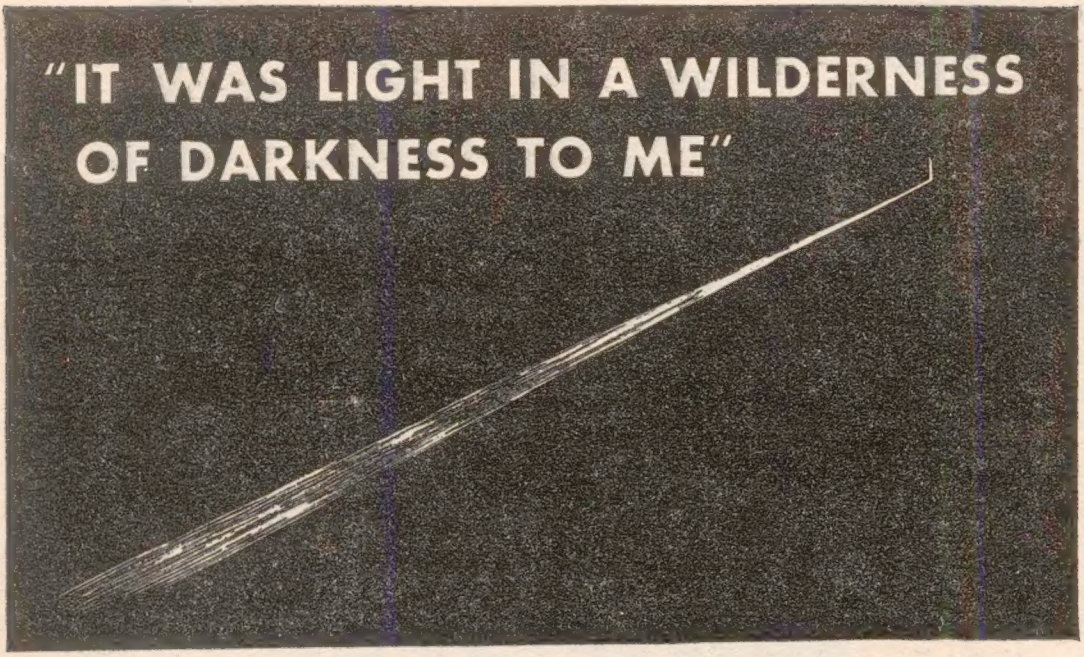
Paradoxical as it may sound, the terms Long Knives, Big Knives, or Great Knives, had in the beginning no actual connection with either a knife or a sword.

It was the untrained ear of a diplomatic, though perhaps somewhat stolid, Dutch interpreter acting as a go-between for Lord Howard of Effingham, then Governor of Virginia at an Iroquois council held in Albany in July, 1684, that first gave rise to the name.

Now Lord Howard of Effingham had never visited the Iroquois before. Consequently, as far as the Iroquois were concerned he was nameless. They decided to remedy that matter and informed the Dutch interpreter that they would like to know the meaning of the Governor's English name.

The Dutchman took the bull by the horns. In his mind the word Howard, if pronounced as a Dutchman will pronounce it, sounded suspiciously like *houwer,* which means a big knife, a cutlass, or a sword.

Accordingly, he told the Iroquois headmen that Howard meant Big Knife. The governor was promptly given the name Assarigoa from the Iroquois *asare,* which is knife, and *goa* or *kowa* which is big. Thereafter all of the Virginia governors were known by that title. In time the name became applied to all Virginians. By the opening years of the 19th century it had traveled to all the tribes of the upper Mississippi and Missouri country.



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HERE'S LUCK

A novelette by Thomas McMorrow

BELIEVE me, kind friends and patrons, Miss Anemone Huck and I were decisively on the nut that day. I mean the day we took my yacht down the coast to Koch's Cove and swapped it with the Crake brothers for their seaside hostlery.

Yes, I am a lightweight by rights, and some of you might remember me when I was Ogre O'Gara and up there in the lights and the money, but this day I was near down to a feather.

There I was, sitting in my yacht *Argo* over in Sheepshead Bay and wondering about eating. I had just reconciliated myself to go over to the Garden and sign up for a prelim and get my block knocked off by some young punk who wanted a win over the once top-hole Ogre O'Gara—when what happens?

A bayman rows by and tosses in a letter from the Huck Brokerage Corporation offering to swap my yacht *Argo* for a seaside hotel. And would I come into a conference.

Well, my yacht *Argo* is a swell little

job, and I liked it, but you cannot eat a yacht sixty-three feet overall, twin Spalls motors and ketch rig.

I just looked to see I would not spend a dime for nothing, but no. The letter was addressed to Jason Dasey Dove, and that is undoubtedly me. So I jumped in the dinghy, dashed to the dock and grabbed the El for the Bridge.

I got to this 42nd Street address, and on a door on the thirteenth floor it said "Huck Brokerage Corporation."

Well, I fiddled awhile in the hall and did not rush into this conference, and when the door opened I tried for an eyeful, and listened over the transom. I am not such a business man.

But it was just a little room, and a flyweight blonde.

I listened in on two conferences, and both of them were bad news.

"Give me that gun, Sim!"

"Miss Anemone Huck, president Huck Brokerage Corporation?"

"Yes, sir!" spoke up the flyweight.

"Attaching the furniture. You're back in the payments."

That was one conference, and the other was somewhat likewise. It went like this:

"Miss Anemone Huck, president Huck Brokerage Corporation?"

"Yes sir."

"Dispossess for non-payment of the rent."

Yes, these two homely bimbos walked right into her like she had nothing, and walked right out again. Well, Dovey, you big sissy, I thought, go on in! Not afraid of her, are you? And with that I shoved right in and spoke up; though among ourselves, and we're all friends and I know it won't go any further, the sex has got the sign on me, and especially the little ones. They are fast.

"Miss Anemone Huck?" I asked to know. "President Huck Brokerage Corporation?"

She was standing at the window looking in the airshaft and taking little jabs at her eyes with her handkerchief like sticking pins in them.

"Just stick it on the file, thank you," she said without turning to look; and I saw that she had stuck on a spike on the desk the papers given her by the bimbos.

"Your letter, Miss Huck?" said I. "About the *Argo?*"

"Oh!" She shot two jabs to the eyes, gave a sniff, and turned around, smiling, and I'd defy you or any man to know she wasn't smiling all the time. They are a deceitful sex of people, especially the flyweights.

"Mr. Jason Dove, isn't it? Do sit down. Yes, we wrote you about your yacht. Our exchange department has found the very thing for you, a seaside hotel. In a general way, you favor the trade, don't you, Mr. Dove?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"But you wish to know more about the hotel, of course."

"Yes, ma'am."

"Here's how they say it in their advertisement: 'For sale or exchange. Quaint little hostlery hard by quaint little village. Delightfully secluded, with the charm of long ago. Full up; big income. Sapphire Hotel, Koch's Cove.' Attractive, isn't it, Mr. Dove?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Well, of course, Mr. Dove," she said, patting the yellow swirl on the back of her head, "that's real estate English, you know. The advertiser isn't trying to say something mean. But don't you think it's worth looking at?"

"Yes, ma'am."

She was doing all the leading and tying me up so I could only say, "Yes, ma'am," and I was getting pretty sore. Stop dogging, Dovey, and go in and fight her, I thought. Are you afraid of her?

But then the door was bumped open and in came a gorilla.

He leaned sideways over the desk and he put his mitt under her chin and he said, "Two bucks, sister."

"Can you come back in a half hour?" said she smilingly.

"Half an hour—now, listen!" he said, and he let his voice go so the wind of it parted my hair. "You borrowed our ten bucks, didn't you? Well, that's two bucks a week. I hope to tell you I'll come back in half an hour, and I will dust this joint off with an axe."

That gorilla wasn't afraid of her. I saw where it was my opening to battle her too, but he was noisy, so I cultivated my voice and said first, "Brother, is anybody deaf? Don't shout."

With that he took up my last year's straw hat and he put it on my head and gave it a hard slap, and I saw where I would have to buy a new one, and I wasn't meaning to buy a new one till after the Fourth anyway. I put my hand in my pocket and looked at my money

and I guessed I would have to wait till August and get two-thirds off, and that made me a little angry; but I hope I am always a gentleman, and no low scuffling, and I would not hit any man unless I am paid money, and no sissy stuff about did he insult my honor, but my katy looked like a straw ride.

So I got up and I said, "Brother, let us adjoin outside, and I will settle this for cash."

He said, "So long's it's settled." And we went outside.

I took him by the nose and I drew him around a corner, and I said, "Punk, is that conversing with a lady? Is that what you call a gentleman? And look at my hat. By rights, I ought to have a new one now and charge you two bucks, but I will wait till after the Fourth like I always done, so give me a dollar-thirty-three, please, and it is your hat."

He was fractious, and I had to cuff him somewhat, and then he sat up and dug, and I gave him two cents change.

MY CONFERENCE with the gorilla had limbered me up, and I could box the blonde now if I kept away from her glittering blue eye.

"The real estate racket is a little quiet, is it not, Miss Huck, just now?" said I, culturing my voice.

"Yes, Mr. Dove," said she, "and so is Abraham Lincoln—I was afraid for you; you are so delicate. Did you pacify him?"

"Oh, no," I replied. "He tried to inveigle me into pacifying him, but I would not demean myself as a gentleman. I gave him money. Brutalizing guys for pleasure is so ordinary."

"Well, Mr. Dove," said she, "I wrote the hotel people first and described your yacht as in your advertisement. And I just got a wire from them. Here it is. It says, 'Fetch boat here today. Crake Brothers.' "

"Sounds like he's ready to sign articles," said I shrewdly, "but hadn't he ought to post a forfeit before I burn all that gas? It is seven, eight hours run. Well, I will give the dock a ring—Hello, hello—Phone out of order, Miss Huck?"

"I had it disconnected," said she, "because I am moving shortly to larger quarters, where there is more light and air."

Under an umbrella on 42nd Street, hey, Miss Huck? thought I. She knew I knew, but that is the sex, and they don't care what are the facts if nobody mentions them.

"We must get the *Argo* to Koch's Cove today, Mr. Dove," said she, "and not let slip this dazzling opportunity. And I advise you to have your broker with you. Yes, I will let everything else slide and go along with you."

"You know about running a boat, Miss Huck?" I inquired.

"I know the ocean from the beach," she replied. "The big thing is not to get them mixed up and run on the wrong one, is it not? I would not forgive myself if you missed out on this."

Well, Dovey, thought I, she is fast and scientific and she will not swap the *Argo* for a corned beef and cold slaw sandwich; and you would, you hunger-striker, you. Because the *Argo* had cost me near thirty thousand dollars. Miss Huck went gathering souvenirs, such as her broker's license and the high school pennant, and I went to the window to look down, thinking, if the gorilla comes back with more bankers, how far to New York? Look before you leap, Dovey. I passed by the typewriter and there was a letter on it, and it went like this:

> Dear Mom:
>
> I can't send you any this time, but hope to soon. The thirty I sent you last time was just my rent, but I do not need it as I think I will accept a good salary somewhere and close up here. You see, darling—

"Pardon me, Mr. Dove," said Miss

Huck, pulling out the letter fast like.

"Allow me with your kind permission," I replied, taking her valise that she had already packed. We went out and jumped in the subway, and in half an hour we were on the float and I was advising her, when you get in a small boat, get in all at once.

"What a big yacht, Mr. Dove," she said while I was tying the dinghy up to the *Argo*. "How many men to run it?"

"Three is right, Miss Huck," I replied. "Or two and a helper. Let me go first, as I pull better than I push."

So I helped Miss Huck aboard, and I started the engines and left her at the wheel and went and pulled up the anchors.

"Why don't you let your three sailors do that hard work?" she said, asking questions. "What large hands you have for not such a large person. How did you break that thumb?"

"Hitch-hiking on the wrong side of the road," said I, laughing that one off as I held the wheel. "I like to work and keep in shape, and my crew don't mind. Look at all the weight I took off this month, Miss Huck. It is a short walk to my belt."

"Indeed, yes," she said, giving a look, "if they are your own clothes. I mean they are cut lovely and roomy."

I SWUNG the *Argo* around Coney Island and pointed her across Rockaway Inlet. The old girl stepped like a taxi dancer, and I guessed it was even money we would get to Koch's Cove, if I had gas enough. The sails on the *Argo* are just to keep her chin up in case you get out of gas, and you would go faster if you would jump over and swim.

I am not a great navigator, and I used to have two men run the *Argo* when I had it, but the sea was flat, and it is all sand around New York, so if I would keep between the ocean and the shore and keep going till I got there but no further everything would be all right unless things went wrong.

I thought best not to tell Miss Huck she was my crew till we were most there, as she might think she did not know enough and would ask questions, and why alarm her when she was having a nice time looking at the chart and being greatly surprised when it came true on the shore?

She also had plans for the hotel when we got it. She said, "You would be deceiving yourself, Mr. Dove, if you think it will be the Poinciana or the Blenheim-Marlboro. Just a quaint little wayside inn under immemorial elms, I imagine.

"Being old and historic with associations of long ago, we can have a centenary or anniversary and invite prominent people, and we might get some time on the air."

"That will be grand, Miss Huck," I said. "If they come, hey?"

"Pardon me? They always come if it is a big dinner. How to make it a big dinner is to have a dinner committee. We invite everybody to be on the dinner committee because they are famous, and after they say yes, we invite them to buy tickets.

"Another feature will be to get some prominent newspaperman among the guests to write up quaint features of the hotel and village for the New York newspapers.

"Another thing is, Mr. Dove, praise the hotel and speak of it highly. If you knock it, he will say to himself, 'His yacht must be no good if he is willing to swap.'"

Dovey, thought I, this little blonde has got two brains to your one.

Late in the afternoon, about four hours too late for lunch, we either had to find Koch's Cove or know why, as the gas gauge was very low. So we found Koch's Cove and the inlet going in, and there was one building on the shore and that was all for miles. The *Argo* bucked

through the waves on a bar and came into the Cove, which might be a mile long.

On the United States side was quite a village, and that was called Koch's Landing on the chart. On the other side of the Cove was a strip of sand keeping the ocean off, and on it was this first building we saw.

It was made of wood and the color of dust, and if it was in south Brooklyn it wouldn't be for long, with the kids touching it off to see the engines. I mean, it was a genuine antique for advertising chewing tobacco, and there were big blue letters on it, but the letters spelled SAPPHIRE.

"That wouldn't be it, would it, Miss Huck?" I said to my crew. "My gracious, no."

"Gosh, no, Mr. Dove," said she, laughing merrily. "That is some old barn."

"Hey, you—ahoy, sir!" I hailed an old fellow who was fishing out of the only rowboat on the Cove. "Where's the hotel?"

"The Safe Here," he said, having his ear.

"I guess so—the Sapphire!"

"The Safe Here," he said having his way. "Thar yonder."

"Quaint old hostlery, isn't it?" said Miss Huck, turning a little blonder. "Place to make a seaside sojourn a joy and a memory, I call it. Twixt cobalt sea and dimpled bay on a sweep of silver beach, Mr. Dove, don't you think?"

Well, Dovey, thought I, there is the hotel and here is the *Argo;* make up your mind what one you will rather row back to Sheepshead Bay. I mean the Sapphire didn't look so hot.

"After coming all this way, Mr. Dove?" argued Miss Huck.

"They might give us a sandwich," I agreed, and went and let the anchors go. "If they have two, that is."

I got Miss Huck in the dinghy and propelled it to a little sand spit and helped her out, and we walked towards the Sapphire.

"This is the hostlery's less appealing facade, no doubt," she said, selling all the time. "It faces on the silver strand and commands an unrivaled prospect, Mr. Dove."

Burrowing in the sand was old bedsprings and tin cans and all kinds of throwaways. Miss Huck was still selling for all she was worth when all of a sudden she sat down on a busted porch sofa and made believe to tie her shoe; but she was handling her handkerchief like it was wet with ink and she would be careful to put just a little on her eyes and nose. I saw where she was all out of kind remarks about the Sapphire Hotel, and was gone back to thinking of the gents on 42nd Street who brought her papers and about her mother who was not getting any thirty dollars this month.

"Miss Huck," I said, sitting beside her, "I am liking it. It is quaint, and full of

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the long ago. Look at that hard little town across the creek. It is delightfully secluded, know what I mean? Don't quit now, Miss Huck. Go in and fight! They don't like it no better than you do. Go on, kid; they can't hurt you!"

"No, Mr. Dove," she said, working on her shoe, "it is just a dump, and I wouldn't swap them your rowboat."

But I nagged her and got her up, and we went around to the front of the hotel, and what was our surprise to behold, it had something. Well, it was still pretty small and old and this and that, but it was alive.

The front steps might be broken, but there was a uniformed bell-hop on them, and rocking themselves on the porch with merry yells of laughter while they inhaled cocktails were flocks and mobs of guests, all dressed up for the summer, and I mean a sporty crowd that had it. Sunday afternoon on the walk at Coney had nothing on this.

I LIT a couple of cigarettes and popped a side look at Miss Huck as we rambled up the steps, but she had those wonderful recuperative powers and was up and fighting.

"Convenient, yet removed, don't you think, Mr. Dove?" she opined. "In the vogue and out of the crowd, I would call it. For the elite few, subtly appreciative of the ultra in bonton and verve, Mr. Dove." I knew her stuff because I had been reading those real estate ads for a month and I admire real language.

Hen Crake was in the doorway, and he offered to throw us out before we got in. I know plenty of baymen down on Sheepshead, and this was a big one about my age, as hard as oyster-shells and strong as a donkey-engine, with an eye like a dogfish and a little squealing voice he got from talking to sea-gulls. Not knocking baymen, because they are my pals—well, this was a nice big one, or anyways a big one. He was one of the proprietors, but he was not as stylish as the guests, because land and water is all the same to a bayman, and he goes wading with his clothes on, and his hat floats off. Hen Crake had no hat.

"Sorry we can't take you, folks," he squealed. "We're full up."

"Is Mr. Crake here?" asked Miss Huck. "I am Miss Huck."

Hen Crake put the shark eye on her and said, "Anemone Huck, president the Huck Brokerage Corporation?"

"Yes, sir."

Hen Crake gave a smile, which is a way men have with Miss Huck, and he put out his oyster-shell hand and announced himself. Then he looked me over and he said, "Name is Dove? Hello, Dove. Head right in, folks."

We came into a big dining room, and it looked all right. A waiter was putting table cloths and knives and forks on the tables just like a real hotel. And in back of the dining room was a bar buzzing with many bar-flies.

Behind the desk in the dining room we met Sim Crake in his shirt-sleeves. He was Hen's brother, but meatier.

"Seen you coming in the Cove," Sim Crake squealed sweetly. "Figured it might be you folks, though we didn't hear nothing from you. Where'd you like your rooms, folks? Put you on the front, if the sea don't bother you. Anywheres you say."

"Thought you were full up, Mr. Crake," I remarked shrewdly. And Miss Huck give me the elbow, meaning, "Praise it up, you dummy, like I told you."

"Full up? Hell, that don't matter, Dove."

"Hell, no," said Hen Crake.

"Pardon, brothers," I remarked, because I disgust profane cursing in the presence of the sex, "if those toofers are smoking your lamps, give them a rub and you will witness a lady. I accept your apology like a gentleman. Chang-

ing the subject, you certainly got a quaint little hostlery here, and I would like to view your delightfully secluded rooms."

The Crakes were very favorably impressed, and smiled under their eyelids at me, and then I followed Hen Crake up a stairs from the dining room.

"Nice corner room here, Dove," said Hen Crake, opening a door to give me a view.

It was a nice corner room, but there was somebody in it, and it was a young fellow lying on the bed in a silk shirt and his coat off.

"We want your room, Walyo," informed Hen Crake, "so get your duds and clear out." Walyo is not calling a name, as it only means young fellow, but this young fellow took incense—he got sore.

"Clear out!" said he. "Since when, Crake? My jack no good?"

"Sleeping a personal friend of mine in here," said Hen Crake. "Sleep you on the pool table if you want to, or run you over to White Point. Come on; make it snappy, hear me? Hit the floor. Got to ready up after you, don't we?"

"That's one," said Hen Crake, going along. "Here's another I would recommend, Dove."

He knocked on a door and somebody said. "Keep out." And the way he said it meant, "No admittance, positively."

But Hen Crake opened the door, and there was a dark gentleman in a red silk bed-jacket sitting in an armchair and coaxing himself to drink a pitcher of ice-water.

"We want your room, Irving," said Hen Crake.

"Hen," said the gentleman, "I don't feel like comedy. So lay off."

"You are not getting no comedy, Irving," said Hen Crake. "Get into your pants and hurry away. I can sleep you on the pool table."

"Are you meaning it?" said Irving, hating to get incense and stir up his head. But he got up and he came over and he said, "You big clam-eating ox, you pull such a thing on me and I'll make you the saddest Crake ever wore fleas."

Hen Crake put out a yard of arm and grabbed Mr. Irving by the bed-jacket and slammed him up against the wall. "Hear me? And you don't need to come back, either. You are not the kind we want patronizing here. You get drunk and you go around advertising the hotel, and saying what a fine place, and all about the swell crowd you met here. White Point is your next stop, and settle your bill on the way out."

"That's two, Dove," said Hen Crake.

"My goodness gracious, Mr. Crake," said I. "We are making you a lot of trouble."

"Trouble?" said he. "No trouble. If you made trouble you would get throwed out. I am just being obliging, Dove."

I WENT downstairs, and I met Miss Huck, who was having a look around.

"I do believe, Mr. Dove," said she, "that they are full up and a big income. I have been having a look around. The guests all look very smart and prosperous, although the women are a little common. And I could not say half enough about that beautiful beach and ocean out there."

She escorted me to the doorway and showed me the ocean, in case I didn't notice it on my way down. It looked very nice. All the liners go along there on their way to New York, and one was going by now.

"Prosperous, Miss Huck?" I said. "You can quote me on that. I seen many hotels, but never one to tie this for being prosperous. You remember how Mr. Crake tried to fight us back when we were coming in? Well, he is up there now battling the guests to get

them out. And he had a particular grudge against one guest for speaking well of the hotel and advertising it. What is it, Miss Huck—a convention?"

The way the guests were cursing each other and hollering showed they were all good friends; and I took a flash at two that were passing by in white felt hats and I said, "Miss Huck, I get it. They are all actors!

"See those two gentlemen going out? I saw them on the stage; I can bet on it. I don't know just where it was, but it was on a stage in a theatre, and I think Bugs Dunn was with me, because he is a newspaperman and on the deadhead list. Well, stars of stage and screen would not like a common hotel and everybody gaping at them, and that must be why Mr. Crake was sore at Mr. Irving for praising up the Sapphire and the guests."

"Yes, that is it, Mr. Dove," said Miss Huck, much pleased. "Now that you mention it, I saw several that I knew from their pictures in the papers. They get bashful if you look at them; notice it? Yes, it is an actors' colony, it must be, though I am more than surprised at some of the language."

Well, swapping the *Argo* for the Sapphire Hotel was as easy as rolling off the roof, and I will come right down to it and talk business, as I do not enjoy to dwell on it.

We had a fine dinner, early to bed, and early to rise, and half-past seven the next morning we were at bat with the Crake brothers.

"Dove," said Hen Crake, "is it a deal? We looked over your boat just now, and we seen a fine boat. You looked over the Sapphire?"

"Uh huh," said I.

"You seen a fine hotel?"

"Uh huh," said I, signaling to Miss Huck to dash in.

"We wish to see the books," said Miss Huck shrewdly.

"Waiting on the desk, young lady. We're charging eight a day American, twelve double, running to two hundred a day, besides the bar and the games. Nine grand a month, Dove, all told, and half profit. There's the books."

Hen Crake then sat on his neck with his feet up and puffed his toofer, and Sim Crake, who seemed to be a little the oldest, said: "Since May day, when we opened for the season. Last year's books we don't have here, and you don't care.'

"Twenty-two rooms, all as is. We'll only move our clothes out and swap you even for your boat. Only you got to say the word by nine o'clock this morning. We don't ask you your business and we don't tell you ourn, only we can use that boat and give you a big bargain if we get it right away, and that is why we sent you a wire to fetch it. Only it's got to be done by nine, and there is the clock."

"But this is highly unusual, Mr. Crake," said Miss Huck, arguing him. "We should have a few days to see that you really own the hotel and all that."

"Well, you ain't," said Hen Crake, getting up. "You ain't got a few more minutes. Sis, everybody knows Crake brothers own the Sapphire. There's the deed on the desk, all sworn. There's the telephone; call anybody. Dove, you got the papers on the boat?"

"In my pocket," said I.

"You get in that sharpie and go out there and take what you like off of the boat, excepting the engines."

I took Miss Huck out on the porch and went in a huddle and I said, "What do you say, Miss Huck? Is this the way to do? I never swapped the *Argo* for a hostelry before."

"Well, Mr. Dove," she said, "it is a terrible rush, but we knew from the wire that they were in a rush. I will tell you, Mr. Dove; when I read your ad in the paper a month ago, I offered your yacht all over New York, and nobody would take it for income property un-

less you added a terrible lot of cash.

"If the hotel is making all they say, and it certainly looks like it, it is eight or nine thousand in the season, and I will study out the books and see if it is true. If they do not own the hotel, they would be stealing the *Argo* and we could send the Coast Guards after them. Go show them what you want from the boat, Mr. Dove, and I will know more about the hotel by nine o'clock."

Well, I went out to the *Argo* and I took my junk off, and I certainly hated to give up the old scow, but I had to eat and even the last month hadn't broke me of the habit. And, Dovey, thought I, if you can't run a hotel as good as those couple of yeggs, you can eat that too.

I wasn't fretting I might lose the actors' trade, as actors and me always clicked, being that I was many years in the amusement business myself, and when I told them I was Ogre O'Gara they would like it.

I went back to the hotel, and Miss Huck took me in a huddle.

"There is nothing false about the Sapphire making the money, Mr. Dove," she said.

"They couldn't fake all those receipted bills for supplies, and also I called people up. I called up the county clerk too, and the legal side looks all right. I think it is a wonderful opportunity, Mr. Dove."

Well, I told you already that we swapped into the Sapphire Hotel, so I will not keep you on pins and needles. Besides, I want to get this part over with. We signed papers and the Crakes said, "Good luck, Dove. We hope you make a million."

"Don't mention it, please," I said. "If I thought I would make a million in this hotel, I wouldn't swap you, because I thought I would make a million once before. A living for a retired person too old to work is good enough for me. Good luck."

SIM CRAKE opened the little safe and took out a black satchel, and he headed out the back door for the dock. Hen Crake was carrying cans of gas from the little electric plant. Quite some of the guests were heading for the dock too, and we went along to see the sailing-party start off, as they said it was.

Sim Crake helped row the gas and the guests out to the *Argo*, and then he turned her over and got the anchors up, and Hen Crake and me and Miss Huck gave them a fond *bon voyage*.

"Seems to me, Miss Huck," I said, "that they were taking lots of lunch on that sailing-party."

We were walking back to the hotel and Miss Huck was saying the Sapphire didn't look like much, but the big thing was it was making the money.

I was looking at the hotel, and I said to Miss Huck, "Some guests are going automobiling, too. But what is the sweat?"

The four cars that the guests had were standing in front of the shed, and the guests were throwing in their grips in a hurry and jumping in after. Guests upstairs were leaning out the windows, hollering, and the guests downstairs hollered back. "Hurry up!" yelled the guests in the cars, and the ones in the windows hollered, "Wait for me!"

Miss Huck and I hurried up and went in the back door to see what was coming off.

Well, they were certainly fond of automobiling. They were throwing their grips downstairs into the dining room. One woman was trying to get down with a steamer trunk, and she fell on the trunk and slid down on top, yelling. A guest in a dripping bathing suit rushed in from the porch and lammed upstairs, dodging the grips, and was back again in a raincoat; but the best of them was the guest in pajamas that came down last.

I grabbed him and said, "Brother,

one small step at a time. What's up?"

"Give me a break, will you, friend?" he said. And he skinned out of the top of his pajamas and ran away half-naked. The cars were moving out onto the road that went over the causeway to the United States and he hopped on a running-board and went along.

"What the deuce?" I said to the bell-hop.

"Search me," said he. "Unless it's a hurricane."

"Might be tonight, maybe," said Hen Crake, standing there. "One's working up from the Bermudas, but that ain't it. I wish I knowed, Dove."

"It started," said the bell-hop, "with a gentleman on the telephone. He yelled and ran."

"Wish I knowed," said Hen Crake. "Couldn't they walk out the door like humans? I feel right mean about this, Dove; it looks bad. I only heard of you yesterday morning through this real estate young lady, so you see I wasn't putting up a job on you. But the way they lit out is funny. It's funny, yes, yes."

I went upstairs and had a look around the rooms. When I came down, Miss Huck was worrying the books again and she looked very low.

"What in the world could it be, Mr. Dove?" she said in a small little voice.

"Search me, Miss Huck," I said. "They're all gone. Outside of us here, and the help, there's nobody in the hotel."

CHAPTER II

THE SAFE HERE

IT looked like this hotel was falling down on us, and it would be very sad. Because among both Miss Huck and I we had about two bucks.

Was it a spot?

"Well, Miss Huck," remarked I, looking for the bright side, "correct me if I air my opinions of guests that take it on the lam, but are they desirable, do you think? Not knocking actors, because actors and me are like Tom and Jerry, but goodness knows, if this is a fire-house, where is the fire? No, Miss Huck, that is acting too common, and we don't want that catalogue patronizing here."

"Crowd of actors, was they, Dove?" said Hen Crake, who was taking it easy in a chair. "Actors, hey? I want to know, now!"

Asking me, and it was his hotel and his guests a half hour ago! I could have put a slug on the big bozo, but what would it get me? That is how you can always tell a gentleman—he will not scuffle and broil unless there is percentage.

Besides, Miss Huck did not know I used to be in the game, and why tip the mitt?

"I have recollections of seeing two of those there guests on the stage somewheres, Mr. Crake," said I. "And Miss Huck recalls to memory some of the others from seeing their pans in the paper."

I looked in the bar in back and there was only the bartender with union wages going like a clock; I looked out front and there was only the last sad remains of the *Argo*, away out. So I rubbed my hands to keep them off Hen Crake, and I said, "I am liking this, Miss Huck! All is the matter with Koch's Cove to make it a grand summer resort is it is a little out of the way."

"Yes, Mr. Dove," said she. "And that's all's the matter with Little America too."

"Well, look at the business they done down there when they got advertised!" said I with the old fighting spirit. "Advertising—am I right, Mr. Crake? How did you advertise, so you got all full

up and a big income, as we seen ourselves?"

"Advertise what, Dove?" said Hen Crake, licking his cigar in shape. "There ain't nothing here but the ocean, and people heard of that. Them that ain't would think you was lying, and you wouldn't like that."

"Some people might like it too, if we could only get them to come here," said Miss Huck; and she went and stood at a side window with her back to us, and I saw it was getting her down.

"Come here?" said I, thinking quick. "What's the matter with them racing here, huh? Offer a cup for a yacht race from the Battery to Koch's Cove? We won't have room for the half of them, if they come.

"Tell you what it is, Miss Huck, we got to go over to Koch's Landing across the Cove first and see about building a new wing on the hotel, as those yachtsmen will get sore if they got to sleep on the beach."

I was not so dumb, understand, and Miss Huck was not so dumb as to hope the New York Yacht Club and Seawanhaka would come racing to fill up our hotel for a two-dollar cup, but she was much pleased because I was trying to please her, and she looked out the window and cried, "Well, if this is Little America, this must be Admiral Byrd coming back in two—four—six automobiles! Give a look, Mr. Dove! Luck is turning!"

I went and gave a look, and there were six automobiles coming over the causeway that crossed the meadows at the head of the Cove. "The guests coming back, hey, Miss Huck? Things is changing fast."

"Them's not guests," said Hen Crake, giving a look. "Them's po-lice cars, Dove."

"Police, hey, Mr. Crake?" said I, looking on the bright side. "Six loads of cops is some honorable escort; they must have some big shot aboard, hey? Here they are coming, and it is going to be very nice advertising for the hotel!"

THE six cars roared up to our front porch, and five of them were full of cops as handsome as cops ever get to be, and the sixth car was full of newspapermen.

Some of them crowded into our dining room and some ran to the other exits, and the handsome mountie of a sergeant hollered, "Line 'em up in here! Get over against that wall."

"Meaning who, may I infer?" said I,

WORLD'S MOST POPULAR LAXATIVE NOW SCIENTIFICALLY IMPROVED!

Ex-Lax now better than ever!

People everywhere are praising the new Scientifically Improved Ex-Lax! Thousands have written glowing letters telling of their own experiences with this remarkable laxative.

"I always liked the taste of Ex-Lax," many said, "but now it's even *more* delicious!"..."It certainly gives you a thorough cleaning out!" was another popular comment..."We never dreamed that any laxative could be so gentle!" hundreds wrote.

And right they are! Always pleasant—always effective—always kind to sensitive systems—Ex-Lax today offers all of these advantages in even *greater* measure! It's a more satisfactory and efficient laxative in every way!

If you are suffering from headaches, biliousness, listlessness or any of the other ailments so often caused by constipation—you'll feel better after taking Ex-Lax.

Your druggist has the new Scientifically Improved Ex-Lax in 10c and 25c sizes. *The box is the same as always—but the contents are better than ever! Get a box today!*

EX-LAX NOW TASTES BETTER THAN EVER!

Ex-Lax now has a smoother, richer chocolate flavor—tastes like a choice confection! You'll like it *even better* than you did before.

EX-LAX NOW ACTS BETTER THAN EVER!

Ex-Lax is now even more effective than it used to be. Empties the bowels *more thoroughly, more smoothly,* in less time than before.

EX-LAX NOW MORE GENTLE THAN EVER!

Ex-Lax now has a milder and more comfortable action. Kind to sensitive systems. No shock, no violence, no nausea!

unwilling to credit he was pointing at me. "Meet the boss, Sergeant."

"Guess we know Hen good enough," said he, "if we don't know any good about him. Snap into it, fellow—you and the lady."

So Miss Huck and I went to the wall and held up our hands and Hen Crake sat on the small of his neck and licked his cigar and smiled and hummed himself a tune.

Some troopers brought out our staff of a cook, two waiters, a chambermaid and the bell-hop, and it was peaceful as a stick-up, and the newspapermen were not pleased.

"Drag 'em out here, Sarge!" asked a cameraman on the porch. "Drag 'em out fighting!"

The rest of the newspapermen lingered around, looking for some good news, and one looked in the register and said, "Forty-three guests all told."

"Make it forty," said a pal. "Then it will be the den of the forty thieves! But where are they? Fetch them in here, boys!"

"They are," said a trooper on the stairs. "Nobody else up here or anywheres."

"Where are they, Hen?" asked the sergeant. "Where's Monk and Yaller Harrigan, Big Mazie, Ice-wagon Larry, and all of them? We know they were here; we had Camera-eye Joe Larkin down here last week looking them over."

"Putting his eye on the guests, was he, Nate?" said Hen Crake, smiling some more. "Are you meaning a regular New York de-tective, Nate? And was that their real names, Nate? Well, this is a hotel and I got to lodge and eat everybody comes if they keep their noses clean and behave."

"What queer names, Mr. Dove," said Miss Huck to me. "They are stage names, Mr. Dove?"

"Yes, Miss Huck," said I. "Only now I remember the stage where Bugs Dunn the famous sports writer took me and showed me these actors on a stage, and it was the line-up at Police Headquarters."

Hen Crake sat up and took interest and he said, "Nate, your raid was tipped, if you ask me! They knowed something, Nate; yes, yes. The way they all run out together."

"And you knew something, too, Mr. Crake," said Miss Huck, getting wroth. "Or you wouldn't be so anxious to swap us your hotel before nine o'clock this morning."

"He did, hey?" said the sergeant Nate, putting the eye on Hen Crake. "He said nine o'clock, lady? So this time we have caught the weasel asleep."

"How I heard of nine o'clock, Miss Huck," said Hen Crake, grinning at the sergeant, "is some of the guests told me last night they was checking out this morning. Good enough, Nate? Well, the next time I have a hotel, and a guest wants to check out, I will ring you, Nate, and have him arrested."

So that is how it was, and these guests were a lot of guns and molls, and that is how the Crake brothers come to be full up and a big income in their Sapphire Hotel so far from nowhere.

"This dump, Mr. Dove," said Sergeant Nate, "has been a hideaway and cooling-off joint ever since the Crakes opened it last May. That is why it is called the Safe Here.

"They are two smart boys. They made a ton of money running rum when it was good, and, being in such pursuits, they got well acquainted with a class of people."

"The Safe Here," said a newspaperman, putting that down to put in the paper. "Sarge, give me that list of guests old Camera-eye got for you."

And me and Miss Huck the owner!

"Listen, fellow," said I. "Give us a break, will you? The Sapphire Hotel is under new management, and only the most respectful guests will be here from now on. Every effort will be done—"

"Nix!" said he. "Dollar a line on that stuff, Dove."

"Those Crakes are a pair, Mr. Dove," said the sergeant, shaking hands. "A pair of scissors, and if they caught you between them I am wishing you luck. Come on, boys."

The six cars headed back for the causeway.

"GOOD LUCK, Dove," said Hen Crake, getting up. "Guess I will pull the hook too. Seein' the po-lice always tires me."

"But, Mr. Crake," said I, "don't even you live in the hotel?" Because that was one of the best reasons why I didn't haul off and put a slug on him.

"Me live here?" said he, giving our hotel a look of great surprise and heading for his car. "Well, Dove, the Safe Here is grand for what it is, but if I owned it and an old bait-barrel, I would know what one to rent out."

"I can't begin to tell you, Mr. Dove," said Miss Huck in a small little voice, and she began to tell me.

"Ahem! All I will say, Miss Huck," said I, driving her back, "is if we are not suited with a hotel all to ourself of twenty-three rooms and two baths we are hard customers, ha, ha.

"This is the proposition, see? There won't anybody come here now that's wrong with the po-lice, and there won't anybody come here that don't like to mix with people wrong with the po-lice. Just those two catalogues, see—and the rest is all ours! Can you imagine?

"The first thing we will do, I will get a car and we will scout around. It is not such a hotel if we can't charge the car. Well, if he will not charge the car, we will give him the taxi concession for the hotel. Then there's the coatroom privilege that is a mint, the tourists' agency for sightseeing, the Stock Exchange board-room, the clever shops in the arcade, and the rolling chair privilege. I tell you what it is, Miss Huck, we have not scratched this hotel!"

Saying which I went to the phone on the dining room desk and tried to get a car, but there were only five Koch's Landing numbers in the book and none of them were a garage. So I got a carry-all.

I did not know what a carry-all was, but there was the number of the Ezra Koch Memorial in the book, and they said it would be quite all right about not having any money, and they would send the carry-all.

"Oh, Mr. Dove, it is a horse and carriage with two horses," said Miss Huck, beholding what was coming over the meadows. "My!"

"Tally-ho, Miss Huck," said I. "Some swell neighbors we got. This must be the riding country, hah? Aha, here is a foghorn Mr. Crake left behind him, in case the carry-all has not got a horn."

Because when Bugs Dunn the famous sports writer and I went to a big millionaire's home on Long Island the big millionaire took us for a ride in a stage with four horses and he drove the horses and he let me blow a horn, and that is very swank.

Well, if this local big shot was driving his carry-all, he was not in his driving clothes but a coat and over-alls, and he had a fuzzy white chin that hit against his nose when he chewed his tobacco.

I escorted Miss Huck in the carry-all, and we sat in the back seat, and the old man took in his anchor that he had tied to the horses' heads and slapped the reins and we were off.

"Tally-ho!" cried I in the spirit, and I blew my horn, only it would not blow a tune like the big millionaire's horn, but only went "Nah-h-h-h." "This is us, Miss Huck! Yes, ma'am, we are in our own class where we belong now, what I mean."

The driver gave a jump and looked at me, and our staff put their heads out the window and admired us.

"How about a horse-show, Miss Huck?" said I, working the old noodle as we dashed gayly along. "If this is a swell horse country, make no mistake, we got some very filthy neighbors; they can rest their chin on it, mark my words. They don't even put their numbers in the book. We will have that big dinner you were planning on yesterday coming down here in the *Argo*, and we will ask all the horse people to have the honor of being on the dinner committee, but not tell them it is ten a crack. Mr. Koch there will know the horse set."

"Is that Mr. Koch?" said Miss Huck. "He looks like he would have to do with horses, but more in their leisure, I think."

"I will ask him, and whatever he says."

I cultured my voice and remarked, "It is a lovely country, is it not, sir? And are you Mr. Ezra Koch himself in person, may I inquire?"

"Nope," said the driver, taking advantage of an opening when his white woolly chin was going down.

"He says not, Miss Huck," said I, and I leaned out and wounded a call on my horn at the old man sitting in the rowboat in the creek as we dashed over the causeway. "That is how to do on a carry-all—why get proud because you are in the money?

"I declare," said the driver, having another jump. "You do take it careless, young fellow. Out of work long?"

"About two years," said I, changing the subject. "Where are you taking us to, may I inquire?"

"Th' Memorial, 'bout four miles out."

"Pshaw, that's too far out," said I. "Drive us around and show us the town, pop, and then maybe we will think of going to look over the Memorial."

He made a noise like a clock going to strike, but he did not strike, and he laughed." And he said, "If you ain't the most careless man! You got no money, you got no job, you got no baggage; all you got is a horn. Heh, heh!"

SO the old-timer drove us around in his carry-all and showed us Koch's Landing, while I skillfully questioned him and drew out that the Ezra Koch Memorial Home was all the same as the local poorhouse, but Miss Huck did not ask me why I laid off the horn, as she was not liking it anyways, not knowing about how they do in carry-alls on Long Island.

"And what, sir," asked Miss Huck, "are the places of historic interest in Koch's Landing? Show us the house George Washington slept in during the battle of these parts. And have you any whales? Used they catch whales around here? And did they get oil?"

"Bunkers, ma'am," said he. "Hundred barrel oil a day when they was plenty bunkers. And smell? Yes, yes. Put your head out the window five mile away and you could smell the weather. If it was going to be fine, it smelled."

"Yonder she stands," said he, pointing his whip at a big frame building that was even worse than the Sapphire Hotel, because its doors and windows were all busted. We could compare, because this building was out on a dock, and the hotel a half mile across the Cove on the beach. "Koch Fish Factory, ma'am, oil and fertilizer. She went busted seven years ago, and busted Koch's Landing.".

"That, pop," said I, "is a great point of interest, but who cares?"

"You would care if you was in five mile," said the old-timer, standing up for his fish factory. "You could smell it over the telephone, young man. Killed the hotel over there on the beach, it did. People was interested as far as White Point. What? No, they didn't want to see it, only not to smell it. Wait around and see; with business getting better and that factory starting up again—"

"Through the windows, Jason!" she said.

"Let's be constructive," said Miss Huck. "Business might get worse. Let us see the flourishing town, please."

"Just back of them trees, ma'am," said the old-timer.

"Isn't it peaceful, Mr. Dove," said Miss Huck, because we met nobody on the road to town.

"Peaceful it is," said the old-timer, "since the fish factory busted and the trains don't stop here no more. Got to get the train to White Point. Never was much to Koch's Landing but the fish factory, and now it's dead as bunkers."

"Quaint little village," said Miss Huck, talking real estate language. "Delightfully secluded, with old world quiet and charm. I tell you what, Mr. Dove, I like this!"

That swell little blonde was a fighting wildcat, and she cast a beaming glance at the village of Koch's Landing when we got back of the trees, but it looked like a village that had lost its fish fac-

tory. There were about sixty houses, most empty, and a little grocery store that displayed the delicacies of every clime on the stack of cans in the window, and also turnips.

"It ain't even a village now, ma'am," said the old-timer. "They give up and the township took them over. Now, White Point, five miles up—"

"White Point, hah!" said Miss Huck, rallying fast. "We can run a bus to and from this White Point, Mr. Dove! Thriving town, is it not? Excellent shops? Every conceivable facility to make a vacation a present joy and a happy memory?"

"Fine town, ma'am. Yes, they got everything to White Point. They got three good hotels right on the beach, too. Hi, Hen! Look, folks, that's Hen Crake—richest man around here, him and brother Sim. Fine boys; but they wouldn't give you nothing. If they had two apples, they would eat one and put the other in their pocket."

"Hi, folks!" squealed Hen Crake, smiling merrily between his feet on the porch-rail and giving us a wave.

Well, hearing about three good hotels on the beach between us and the customers was one to Miss Huck's wind and she had no more real estate language. Her eyes shined like blue emeralds and she said, "Stop the carriage, please. Mr. Dove, I am going to speak to that man."

It looked to me more like she was going to poke him, the way she jumped down and marched up to the porch, and I hoped to goodness she would demean herself as a lady, because if it came to poking I was feeling not a little pokey myself.

So I stayed in back. Dovey, thought I, watch yourself in there, and do not let that disrespectful man allure you into broiling. Remember you are a gentleman, you hear? Anyways, turn the punch as you throw it and look out for that bad thumb.

When I came up behind her she was saying, "You give Mr. Dove back his yacht and take your nasty little hotel. If you claim you didn't know the police were coming to arrest all your guests, you did—you did so!"

"A deal's a deal, young lady," said Hen Crake, lighting a match on his pants. "Hello, Dove."

"Well," said Miss Huck, "what about my commission on selling your hotel? Supposing it is worth twenty-five thousand dollars—"

"How much?" said Hen Crake, getting surprised. "Why, Sim and me give only two hundred dollars for it, and it ain't worth that now, with them newspapers advertising it." He gave his smile. "Collect from Dove, there! That's a grand boat you sold for him, and he ought to pay you handsome."

"I'll get a lawyer after you; see if I don't," she said.

"Young lady," said he, making himself comfortable in his chair, "I been chased by all the dogs. Git your lawyer."

I was hoping she would poke him, because a gentleman never fights if he can dog it but he will defend a lady every time. But she only stamped her foot and said, "If I wasn't a woman."

"Yes, and if I wasn't a gentleman," said I. "What a break you're getting, Crake!"

Saying which, we went back to the carry-all and told the old-timer we had enough and he could take us back to our hotel.

DRIVING over the causeway to the beach, the tide was out from the black mud-flats and the air was full of tang and ozone and I took a sniff and said, "Speaking of the fish factory, Miss Huck, if they don't start it up again, fine and dandy, and if they do we will specialize in guests that got hay-fever. The sea is a great cure for hay-fever,

and they could keep trying their smell on the fish-factory, hey, Miss Huck?"

Well, that might be only a pretty good idea but Miss Huck was looking pretty low. She was only a flyweight anyhow, and a mere tyro in age, and I was old enough to be her big brother, so when she took a point of her handkerchief and speared a tear, I gave her a hug and said, "Lay off that stuff, kid, you hear? Where is the big fighting heart? Where is the old killer instinct, hah? You're quitting, are you? Well, I always heard blondes were yellow. What about the dimpled beach and unrivaled prospects of the quaint old-fashioned ocean by the hard little town? Miss Huck, I am liking this!"

We got out at our Sapphire Hotel, and I gave the old-timer a quarter, and he said, "Ain't you going to the Memorial?"

"I guess we won't bother," said I. "It is a little too far out of town. You tell them much obliged and we might give them a ring again."

He looked at his quarter, looked at us, made his whirring noise, and laughed.

Well, if we were a laugh to him, it was honors even, and Miss Huck said to me, "What are you laughing at, Mr. Dove?"

"Why," said I, "the Memorial people thought we were busted and no money and just a couple of paupers."

"Yes," said she. "But what are you laughing at?'

Well, that was a long day. Miss Huck and I could go around deceiving one another that everything was going to be jake, but neither of us could deceive ourself. No, no, the little old Sapphire was all through.

Well, the way the wind dug in its toes that afternoon and growled and pushed against the old Sapphire it looked like we'd better make up our minds whether to go to New York or stay in the hotel and go to sea. By the time it was dark, it was a full gale, and going up. Hen Crake said that morning something about a hurricane coming.

"Take the coping off the roof next," said I to Miss Huck, sitting in the dining room and listening to the sand blasting the windows.

"Speaking of coping, Mr. Dove," said she, "I fear we will have to cope the servant problem. The help saw us going off in that carry-all and it gave a bad impression. So they are going to walk out tomorrow, if they don't get a week in advance. What had we best do, Mr. Dove?"

"Oh," said I in a huff, "so they are going to abscond if we don't except dictation, Miss Huck? Well, we won't give them the week in advance! This thing of labor dictating to capital, just because capital is a little short of money, has got to be called to a stop or it will cost us our last dollar. Our last seventy-five cents, I mean."

"What a funny thing, Mr. Dove," said Miss Huck, who was facing a window that looked out on the Cove. "It is all black over there on the shore. All the lights are gone out."

"Pole blown down, I guess. Good we are independent and have our own plant, only we got to buy gas for it."

"Excuse me, Mr. Dove," said she. "But I think I will retire as it is getting pretty late. Are you going to retire?"

"No, I am a bad sleeper on such a night," said I.

"First I will bring you something I saw in a medicine bottle in my room to make you sleep, Mr. Dove," said she.

She brought back a little green bottle of white pills, and I took her hand with it and got familiar and said, "Good night, An."

" 'Night, Jason," said she.

So that was something, and I felt great, and didn't care about having this hotel and losing my yacht *Argo* for an hour or so.

WELL, I sat up to nearly three o'clock, listening to this storm, and closing doors when the wind would bounce them open. It was a hurricane.

Then I thought I would go to bed, as a hotel magnate wants to be on the job in the morning. I went in the bar, poured myself a good shock, and took it down, with three of the pills from An's little bottle. It said *one* on the bottle, but that couldn't be right, I thought, because they were such little pills.

So I turned in and corked off.

Well, the next thing was I was dreaming.

I was listening to music, going 'round and 'round, going in here, coming out there, a regular orchestra, and that might have been the storm going in here and coming out there, where it blew in doors and a couple of windows.

It was a grand dream. I dreamt the hotel was so full of desirable guests you couldn't stick a pin in it—a crowd of good sports out for a time and simply filthy with money. Yes, sir, the band was playing somewheres and hearts were light, particularly me and An's. An had a bucketful of money. Some dizzy dream?

Just wait till I tell you.

I woke up—and I could still hear the music; it was still in my ears.

My eyes stuck but I got them open, and it was a fine day, only the sun was on the wrong side of the house, and that was strange, because the sun is generally where it belongs. But when I looked at my watch, it was three o'clock, the same as I went to bed. So with a moment's thought I saw it must be three o'clock in the afternoon. And the band kept on playing.

I took a breath and swelled out the bellows; I felt like I had not been breathing all night. Dovey, said I, that bottle was right—it said one and it meant one. Go jump in the ocean and get that dream music out of the head.

So I put on my swim-suit and opened the door and stepped out to go take a swim.

Well, strange to say, the music was louder outside and I could hear the crowd better. I shook the old noodle to shake out such silly noises and walked to the stairs and looked down in the dining-room, which was also the foyer, lounge and so on.

"Cucu-racha! Cucu-racha! La, la-la-la-la-la-la!"

The band was still going, only it had changed its tune; but now I could see it too. Six uniformed pieces and a megaphone to put over songs. The tables and chairs were gone, and there were about a hundred cleverly dressed ladies and gentlemen shaking a leg, and waiters in white coats edging trays along.

I closed my eyes tight and took a good breath and blew it out hard and cried "Bah-h-h!" But no go; the band kept on playing and the dancers dancing.

Well, sometimes when I am dreaming, I know I am dreaming, and I think I do things but I don't. Dovey, thought I, go on down there and pay no attention and jump in the ocean and you will wake up falling out of bed. So I went downstairs and paid no attention, and a gentleman doing fancy steps stepped back on my foot and I bumped him. He felt so real, I said, "Pardon me."

He looked at me in my swim-suit and inquired crossly, "Are you cutting in or jumping in? Because this is the dance floor and the water is outside. Make up your mind."

That shook me up, and I wasn't so sure, so I grabbed a waiter and took his arm and felt his muscle.

"Listen, pardon me," said I. "What's up? What came off?"

"Up, sir?" said he, like a waiter. "Off?"

"All these people! He! She! You! Them! Me!"

"The bar is to the rear, sir," said he, hurrying off.

I went in the bar and it was jammed; I couldn't get near it. My bartender was back there emptying all the bottles back of the bar into a big keg, and on the keg a piece of paper said: "*Cocaigne* Special Cocktail."

I spoke a gentleman who was trying one of these Specials, and I said, "Might I ask you a question, sir, and see if I'm screwy?"

"Shoot," said he. "You don't look right, for a fact."

"Where did all these people come from? Something happen?"

"Where did they—What—You *are* screwy," said he, pulling away. "Go give yourself up."

I went back in the dining room, and I saw An behind the desk and I pushed up to her. And what do you say she had beside her on a chair?

A tin bucket full of money, and she was making change from it for a fifty dollar bill.

"An!" cried I, avoiding my eyes from the bucket of money. "Is it real? Am I talking to you? Is that money?"

"Now, Jason," said she, "this is no time for fooling. I'm rushed to death. Watch the pail."

And she rushed away like a dream, leaving me looking at all that money.

"Won't somebody give me a tumble?" I cried. "Don't nobody here know poor old Rip Van Winkle?"

"Hello, Ogre! Look, Mimi, here's Ogre O'Gara!"

And who was it but Bugs Dunn, the famous sports writer, in a white pants and blue coat, and who was he dancing with but Mimi Ducray, that was Miss Coney Island at the Mardi Gras two years ago. I ought to know Bugs, who was my pal, and I ought to know Mimi, because her and I were sweeties when I had it to sport a girl around. She looked at me with those big black eyes and she said, "Hello, Ogre!"

"Oh, no," said I, working the old noodle. "You're not kidding me. You're not real. "I'm upstairs in bed in the Sapphire Hotel, which is a dead horse on a sandbar eight hours out of Sheepshead Bay and a healthy run from nowhere. I swapped my yacht *Argo* for this dead plug, and was I stuck! There are no guests in this big barn of a hotel and never will be, and I am sick, sore, busted and disgusted. Nobody's here but Miss Huck and me, and you can't kid me. I'm asleep, but I'm waking up!"

CHAPTER III

STORM CENTER

"WHY, Ogre," said Mimi Ducray to me, "you must have been drinking that *Cocaigne* Special they're mixing in the bar. Or is that how the natives say hello to white folks? How did you get here, Ogre? Stand still and stop staring."

"Mimi," said I, "what day is it?"

"Friday."

"Friday? Then I must have slept a whole week! Because I went to bed Thursday night or Friday morning, after taking some pills out of a green bottle to make me sleep, and it couldn't have been last night!"

I looked in Mimi's big black eyes, and she still looked mighty good to me —speaking as among friends—so I said, "You didn't kiss me, Mimi, for one thing, and you always used to kiss me when I was dreaming. So I must be awake now, hey?"

"Walk in your sleep, Ogre," said she, laughing. And she gave me a nice kiss, opening her mouth a little, so I wouldn't miss.

"Sounds like a horse walking in the mud," said Bugs Dunn, who was sporting Mimi.

"In the first place, good friends," said

I, looking around to see if An Huck was casing me, "lay off on that Ogre stuff, because I am the proprietor of this quaint nook, and some of my guests might think they'd rather go to a real hotel more convenient, and not come away out here to a little dump run by an ex-pug. So call me Jason."

"Jason it is, Jason," said Bugs Dunn. "But what do you mean a more convenient hotel? Mimi, I think friend Jason Dove here just woke up! Surely, Mr. Dove, you know what happened to the *Cocaigne?*"

"I swallowed it, Bugs," said I. "It brought down all the sleep I lost in twenty-eight years."

"Bugs, he doesn't know, on the level!"

"I thought it was just a line. That's where I met Mimi, on the *Cocaigne* yesterday. We thought she was a cruise-ship, but she thought she was a sight-seeing bus, and now look at her!"

They turned me around and pointed me through a window.

And there was a great big ocean liner almost on the beach, right in front of my hotel. She was so close in I could read her name on her nose, and it was *Cocaigne.*

There was a Charritt & Merman wrecking tug with a high smoke-stack working on the ship already, and three more big tugs just arriving from New York.

So that's where my guests were coming from. A ladder was down the side of the *Cocaigne,* and the passengers were climbing down to the boats. The way the *Cocaigne* was laying, it killed the surf on the beach, and they were getting out of the boats right in front of my porch, except the biggest boat, that had power, and was going around the point of beach to come up behind me in Koch's Cove.

"We never felt it, Jason!"

"My steward says it was the fog."

"He's dizzy," said Mimi. "I was in bed looking out the window in case I might see something in that awful storm and tell the captain, when—bump! We bumped."

"Nerts," said Bugs Dunn. "It was a fog! Because why couldn't he see the shore lights? He never saw a thing. If this hotel proprietor hadn't kept his front door shut, the captain would have sailed the *Cocaigne* in and out the back door and missed it."

I wasn't giving much attention because I couldn't get over having this ocean liner laid right on my doorstep with five hundred passengers.

And that wasn't even a little of it. You ought to see the lines of automobiles coming over the causeway from the United States.

New York, Connecticut, New Jersey, Pennsylvania; and airplanes landing on the beach and in the Cove. Excursion boats and busses; the United States Shipping Board and the Koch's Landing board of trustees, they came too. Looking, and drinking *Cocaigne* Specials, and eating hamburgers and dogs. Newspapers, telephone, telegraph, radio, all spotting on the *Cocaigne* only a short shout from the Sapphire Hotel. Had we slipped and fell in a butter-tub?

A radio announcer was announcing on the radio.

"I am talking from the front porch of a little hotel called—just a moment—called the Sapphire or Safe Here—just a moment—the Sapphire Hotel! Right on the beach facing the ship. I could recognize from here the passengers crowding on the *Cocaigne's* rails, it is so close in.

"Back of me in this quaint little hotel an orchestra from the ship is playing The Carioca—I'll let you listen to the music—and a happy throng of the passengers are dancing. Others are taking advantage of the surprise visit at this delightfully secluded beach to enjoy a bracing plunge in the surf. The atmosphere is gala in the extreme. Delicious cocktails are being quaffed in the hotel.

bar and about me here, and the terrors of the storm are gone like the Arabs and the afternoon is filled with music."

I WAS getting a load of these kind words about my hotel when somebody jerked me and it was the newspaperman who was at the police raid on the Sapphire and who wouldn't put in his paper that Mr. Jason Dasey Dove had just bought the Sapphire and it would be very select and respectful from now on.

"Hello, Dove!" said he. "How about a story?"

"Dollar a line, fellow," said I.

"You sold a story, Dove," said he. "Proceed!"

"I'll make it short and sour," said I, because he was so mean the day before. "I was asleep upstairs in bed at the time—"

"—in bed," said he, writing down. "Unable to repose because of the howling of the hurricane, you pressed your face against the streaming pane beside you and pitied the plight of them abroad on the raging deep. Suddenly—hey, Dove—suddenly a terrific crack of lightning, and a crash of thunder lit up the room and made the outside bright as noonday. And there, within arm's length, was a great steamship. Great, Dove!"

"Says you. I was asleep upstairs—"

"Continue, Dove. The lightning vanished like a flash, but the long lines of gleaming portholes—hey, Dove?—and over the howling of the elements came the heroic strains of 'God Save All Here.' Realizing in a twinkling that human lives were menaced on the angry deep—"

"Listen! I was asleep, you hear?"

"I'm listening, Dove," said he, writing away. "—menaced on the angry deep, you leaped from bed, jumped into your clothes, bounded to the telephone and called the Coast Guards. Shouting for hot coffee and blankets, you rushed and sprang for a lifeboat. If it hadn't been for you, a thousand precious lives would have been snuffed out in an instant. 'But, after all,' added Mr. Dove, modestly, I only did what any man—' "

"Shut up!" cried I. "I was asleep upstairs, you hear? And I slept straight through till ten minutes ago!'

" 'Would have done under the same circumstances.' Great stuff, Dove; bill us for two columns. Prominent New York realtor, ain't you? Got a picture? Hey, Mike—shoot this guy! Catch hold this oar, Dove—glare in the storm—lift the oar—Camera!"

"I'll wrap this oar around your neck," said I, lifting and glaring. "That's not my story, you hear?"

"Got him, Mike? Holding oar with which modest and unassuming New York businessman—Thanks, Dove!"

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD STORE NOW HAS THIS AMAZING NEW WATCH

A sensation in every way! Jeweled movement! Beautiful chrome-finished curved case. Handsome leather strap or adjustable metal band. Guaranteed. But be *sure* to look for this name on the dial.

Ingersoll

"Why, Jason," said Mimi, admiring. "Oh, ain't you artful!"

"It's a lot of static, Mimi," said I. "Though, of course, it's no more than any man—Hey, fellow! What paper?"

Just then came a car with the first afternoon extra, and everybody from the ship raced out to get a paper and read what happened. It was a laugh to Bugs Dunn, who was in the racket. Mimi read all about how the ship went ashore, and it was all different from what she knew, so she said, "Oh, I am all wrong; I didn't know it was like that!"

A sailor, came, a boatswain, blowing his whistle.

"All passengers of the *Cocaigne* stand by to go aboard ship at once! All passengers—"

The tide was flooding, and the tugs were pulling for all they were worth to get the boat off the sand.

They coughed, and backed away, and sat down on their tails and pulled, and the *Cocaigne* tried to help with pulling on a rope too, but it was no go.

They lifted a spar on the fore-deck of the ship, with booms to lift weight off her. Because the tide was going down now and the clock would go around before they would have a chance to try again.

Hen Crake was standing down there at the water, watching them trying to get the ship off.

"Will they make it, Mr. Crake?" said I like a friend. Because I was making a pailful of money out of his hotel, but where was my yacht the *Argo* that I swapped him? Somewheres out there in the briny, and not a whisper from her since the big wind. Well, why throw cold water on a guy when you took his clothes?

He looked at me with his shark's eyes, and then he looked at the mob squirming in my ballroom and the waiters rushing *Cocaigne* Specials and a million cars coming over the causeway, and right there is where he got to thinking what he would do to me.

"She's here for the season, Dove!" said he. "It's sanding up around her right now. Try her again September or next March maybe, and then she won't come."

I got hold of An.

"It is a pleasure-cruise, Jason," said she. "They got to keep the passengers pleased or they might go back to New York."

"How much money you got in that bucket, An? Because we got to get it while it's good."

I went up and buzzed the radio announcer, who was stalling along and having nothing to say. He passed the word to his mike.

"The Sapphire Hotel here is short of help and supplies, as you might imagine. It wants assorted liquors, foods, waiters, bartenders cooks, porters.

"Also a couple hundred chairs, tables, sun-umbrellas. You can write your own ticket on this. I'm speaking for the manager and he is a little flabbergasted. He's loaded to the gunwales with guests now, and still they come. As far as I can see from here—"

"Mr. Dove, on the telephone!" yelled the bell-hop. And that was the first bimbo wanting to sell me something. Well, he was a mortician and he offered me a grand buy in a hundred coffins, claiming the horrid truth about the wreck was being held out. We didn't do business, but then the food and drinks people called up, and guys to rent tents and cots and chairs and tables, and employment agencies with jags of help—ice, ice-picks and toothpicks, dishes and dishwashers, a wagonload of pickled—I told them all to come running.

Well, you can believe we got some wise helpers along with the good ones, some of that "Slip-me-a-buck-and-I'll-cut-the-bill-in-half" kind, but even so we did marvels and filled the bucket every day. An said running a hotel was only

keeping house—keeping a madhouse—and she kept plucking money wherever the long green bloomed.

And was Hen Crake not liking it. Because the *Argo* hadn't been seen or heard since the night of the big wind.

And that wasn't all! Listen—the Crake brothers' bankroll went to sea on the *Argo* too. I found that out later. Yes, he had all his eggs in the *Argo*, Hen did, but he wasn't advertising.

MIMI wanted me to come out to parties on the *Cocaigne*, and it listened good, but where did I get off?

"Listen, darling," said I, "is that a hotel man? I am bandy-legged with jumping two ways at once, and with half as much hollering I could be burned at the stake. I got a little something else to look out for besides you, silly as it might be."

"And a wry neck," said she, "from looking out for that silly little something else when you are with me."

"Who says what?" said I. "Oh, I see how you mean. That is Miss Huck, president of the Huck Brokerage Corporation of 42nd Street, and she is my broker. Why be a sap?"

"She got a nice little figure, I give her that," said Mimi, who was Miss Coney Island in two silk handkerchiefs at the Mardi Gras and who has it like this and like that, but she is not small and she will always call attention to a girl's good figure.

She said, "I was going to be a Spanish senorita because that is how you always liked me. Wish me luck?" And she put her arm around my neck and put up her mouth, and—well, I will defy any man. So I took a breath and said, "I got no time to waste my time, but I will go for strictly business and drum up trade."

Next day I had to go over to Koch's Landing on some hotel business, and you ought to see the place. It was not missing its fish factory a little bit now. Yes, business had looked up and then got up and jumped around. Koch's Landing, what with a million automobiles or less, was back on the map with a loud report and blinding flash.

Everybody was out there slapping paint, nailing shingles and hanging the old front gate. The houses had all turned white with red and green roofs, and had signs out saying *Tourists*. And plenty strangers crowding on the sidewalk and all primed to be summer boarders and buy cheap all the rotten old boats laying on the flats since the fish factory busted up.

The stores were open and doing fine. The railroad station was open too. They even had a church ringing wedding bells. Yes, a wedding party was coming from the church and people were throwing their old shoes and not guessing they'd have them heeled and tapped. Even the mayor and board of trustees were back on the job; they landed home a little late and the only way they could get in the money was to start a government.

The only citizen who was out of luck was the old-timer that drove the Ezra Koch Memorial Home carry-all. He was in his empty carry-all putting the eye on the wedding and all the doings.

"What do you say, pop?" asked I. "Business as unusual, hey, Pop?"

"Business, young fellow," said he, rumbling his tobacco with his woolly chin, "is something fierce. The Ezra Koch Memorial Home was the most prosperous poorhouse in six counties, and now we got next to nobody. They're getting day's wages for doing nothing! See Dad Spillett over there, ninety year ole and getting nine a day for carpentering—heh, heh."

He looked at the bride.

"Pop," said I, having a thought on my mind, "what do you think of this marriage game? Is it a gyp? Is it a dive off the dock? Or give me the en-

couraging facts. Go on, allure me some."

"I got nothing against marriage," said he, encouraging me at first. "My own dad was a married man, and he lived to eighty-six."

"Yeah?"

"Yes, and if I could go on three-year voyages like my dad, I might be a married man myself and willing to live to eighty-six. But steam and the Panama Canal has took all the comfort out of married life, young fellow. Don't tell me what I know!"

Thinking about being married got him blue in the face. He was a warning against women, he was.

"Women, young fellow, got no notion of keeping a house shipshape! They'll move things in a minute that ain't shifted in forty year. In forty year! They take your tobacco and soak it and pour it on the flowers; they take the flowers and put them in your tobacco jar. They knock spiders off of the ceiling onto your bed; they bring cats to howl around the house; they don't cook honest and they don't eat honest, and you can't sit down but they go to sweeping under your chair. And with a daughter in the house, life is a curse, with young fellows sitting on your porch till you'd walk by your own house and not know it from a hotel."

"Think they'll get the ship off, pop?" said I, to take his mind off old times.

"Never, young fellow. She's there and she'll stay. Koch's Landing is done for. Because they come to see the darned ship, and then they take a room or a house for a month because Koch's Landing is so quaint!"

WELL, it seemed the old-timer was not the only Koch's Lander who opined the *Cocaigne* had come to settle.

Looking out the back window that afternoon, I saw Hen Crake getting out of his fast sea-skiff alongside the little wharf on the Cove. He'd been visiting and questioning aboard the tugs out in the ocean.

He walked in on An and I and propositioned us.

"Dove," said he, "put a price on the hotel."

Just like that. "You mean you want to buy it back, Mr. Crake? Sit down, Mr. Crake. Have a nice cigar."

"Dove," said he, having three cigars, "we all got to pay for our mistakes. How much do I pay for mine?"

"Just a moment, beg pardon, Mr. Dove," An horned in. "You got a broker, you know." She patted her yellow flair or swirl and gave Hen Crake a sideways look out of her blue eyes, as sweet as poison. She liked Hen Crake only somewhat; if he was starving, she would spend her last dollar and buy him a set of false teeth.

"You were a little hard to do business with last week, Mr. Crake," said she, "when I asked you to trade Mr. Dove back his yacht *Argo*. And now you would like to buy back the hotel? Have a look at the books and see what we're making."

"What," said Hen Crake, "would I want to look at something you wrote in a book for, when I can see with my own eyes? How much?"

"We got the biggest attraction on the Atlantic coast," said An, looking fondly at the *Cocaigne* through the front window. "Bigger than the Statue of Liberty; and look at the business they do in New York! But we wouldn't be piggish; we'll sell you back the hotel for—for one hundred thousand dollars."

"Getting that," said Hen Crake, "would be getting. Well, supposing I said yes; how much time you give me to fetch here the money? I want to Wednesday noon."

"If you sign up hard and fast," said An. "And a check on account for—for five thousand dollars."

"The last time I seen you, young lady," said Hen Crake, "you was an

oyster-fish, and you was laying in the grass out there in the Cove with your mouth open, to snap toes off. All right; you have snapped. Write out your paper."

Well, An wrote out a regular contract to buy the hotel, her being a real estate lady, and Hen Crake signed it up and put down a check for five thousand dollars.

That check turned out to be rubber, understand me, but Hen Crake had an alibi ready, and said it was because the fussy bank wanted his brother Sim to sign too, but he would take it up and make it all right on Wednesday.

But before that check snapped back on us and alarmed us somewhat, Hen Crake had allured us into spending a lot of money.

He said to me, "Now that we're all friends again, Dove, and everybody's getting, I want you to do me something, Dove, as among two gentlemen.

"I want you to get the hotel ready for big business, and I'll settle the bill with you Wednesday; you can't spend more than five thousand before then.

"Start a wing on the hotel to give folks room, and not have them camping out on the chairs, like I seen them last night."

"Make a place out there on the sand for them to dance, so as I can have this dining room back. I'll send a builder and you let him go to it. He'll want to deal with you and not me, because the hotel's yourn yet. And I'll pay you all back Wednesday."

An didn't want to do it.

"Don't you do it, Jason," said she. "I feel in my bones! That man is a storyteller, and don't you spend five cents on him promising to give it back."

"Well, An," argued I, "here's a letter just come from the association of yacht clubs taking up my offer of a cup for a race from anywheres to Koch's Cove. That's one on us; they'd be coming anyway to look at the *Cocaigne*. Well, what do we care for a two-dollar cup; but we want to fix them up with a room. And what about the grand anniversary dinner for that Wednesday night? I'm putting a banner on the front right away announcing the dinner. Besides which, I already told the contractor Hen Crake sent to go ahead and rush it. See the lumber out there already?"

After which arguments, An thought it might be all right to tell the contractor to go ahead.

Well, the minute I saw Hen Crake's contractor I thought I knew him from the old days, because I knew them by the thousands when I was in the game, and we got good friends and I agreed to pay him off every night. I recalled to mind afterwards that who he looked like was Blinky Gannon, that invested my money for me so I would make a million. I did not make a million or see Blinky Gannon again, so I remembered him. He used to drop one eye. Hen Crake's contractor was named Matt something.

But did Matt get busy, with twenty carpenters! They pulled that dance pavilion and wing right up out of the sand. They put down flooring like unrolling a rug, slipped a red and yellow canvas over the top, and there was a dance pavilion, bandstand and soft drink dispensorium.

Cypress posts for the wing sprouted up, stringers ran along and beams jumped across, and by the first day there was the bare bones of a wing as big as the whole Sapphire Hotel.

"A thousand dollars on account, please, Mr. Dove," said Matt.

It was more than we made all day, but we were getting action. "Hey, An, pardon me! Fetch the bucket!"

An was a little mad when Hen Crake's check on account bounced back.

"I'll tell you what it is, Jason," said she, "that man is only a pirate, and his brother Sim was another. Well, that is the last fast one he will put over on me,

I can tell him. He will lay a hundred thousand dollars cash money on the table next Wednesday, and all that we have spent for him, and no excuse for a cent!"

Well, but we were in the money up to our knees, and it was in a panic to jump in our pail, and more every day, and we should bother if we were only spending what we took.

And, seeing that we were going to give up the hotel Wednesday for a mere hundred grand, An figured a new angle and got a painter painting signs up the beach to say: "North Miami Shores and Palm Beach Extension." Because many guests were asking could they buy lots and look at the *Cocaigne* without paying rent, and An said Koch's Cove was in for a healthy growth, and we better jump on for the ride.

"Not a boom," said she. "Because anybody would be silly to invest in a boom. But a very, very healthy growth. Jason, you will make a million!"

I EXPLAINED about that to Bugs Dunn the famous sports writer when he wanted to fight me.

He said, "I have a piece of the Morning Glory Athletic Club, and I can fight you there against the contender who is being built up, and your bit will be eight grand. Well, the contender is very good, but so is eight grand when you are near three years out of the game. A week's training and you will take a more graceful dive; though you look pretty hard."

"I was as hard as a park bench," said I, "till a week ago. I am now a little upholstered. What do you mean, take a dive? I can take that punk over the telephone, but where's the percentage? I can make eight grand that week right here. Bugs, I am making a million."

"Again?" said he, admiring. "It's a gift! Well, there is eight grand. Think it over, but not too long, as I got to have yes or no."

I mentioned concerning a bout with the contender to An, using diplomacy, while we were having dinner in the pavilion like the king and queen in dress clothes and watching the automobile people dance to our own band; we had our own orchestra already, a hundred and a quarter a night. There was a dinner dance on the *Cocaigne,* but we weren't bothering. This was Tuesday night, the night before Wednesday.

"An," said I, "what do you think of pugs, as a rule?"

"Pugs?" said she. "Oh, I think they're precious! I could love a pug. How is it you never see any pugs any more? I'd love to have a pug."

"Is that right," said I. "Well, there are a few around."

"Such homely, hideous little things, with their turned-up noses and funny tails. My grandfather had the last pug I ever saw."

"Oh," said I. "Pug-dogs. Yes, they are something grand. But now I am referring to puglists, professional boxers, the manly art. How this come up, Bugs Dunn the famous sports writer was inviting me to a boxing contest at his Morning Glory Athletic Club, and how would you like to witness the battle?"

"A prizefight?" said she. "Oh, no, that's out with me, Jason. It is a brutal and degrading exhibition. Why should Mr. Dunn think a nice boy like you would have such low pleasures?"

"Oh, I used to go to fights up to a couple of years ago. That's how I know Bugs Dunn."

"Why, Jason, I can't imagine!" said she. "A nice boy like you. You enjoy brutality? Broken noses and teeth and black eyes and mashed ears and all?"

"No, no, An," said I. "That's why I quit. There was getting to be too much of that. When a man gets of a certain age, he can't take more than some of that and like it. He don't come back like he used to, see what I mean?"

"I should think he wouldn't," said she.

"Jason, this is a new hidden side of you."

"But, An," said I, "supposing I could make a lot of money?"

"Is that a reason?" said she, staring at me in disgust. "Jason, what got in you all of a sudden? No, I will not go to Mr. Dunn's prizefight, and I want you to promise me never to go again. Promise me, Jason!"

So I told Bugs Dunn I could not see the percentage, and I rather make a million than battle his punk.

AN and I took a crawl on the beach in the moonlight, and it was pretty grand, looking back at the old Sapphire streaming lights and the band playing and across the front the date for the grand anniversary dinner to the dinner committee.

And the lights out there on the sea, where the tugs were pouring sparks and the *Cocaigne* all lit up. There were five tugs now and pontoons and a big sand-sucker like a floating house.

"This is pretty grand, An," said I. "You know, when I walked in your office on 42nd Street a few days ago, I was so broke I had to save up to buy yesterday's newspaper. I would go and sit with the bums in Bryant Park, only I didn't have the influence to get in without a ticket."

"I wasn't going so big myself, Jason," said she. "I had pawned everything I could hock, and I was stripped down to an evening gown; next I had to strip up and go sun-bathing. Well, if I got any poorer I would be arrested!"

It was funny how I kissed An. We were sitting there on the sand and talking of this and that like two friends, and the minute we stopped talking I kissed her or she kissed me, I don't know, I guess it was both.

At nine in the morning the bos'n came around again, blowing his whistle on the porch of our hotel.

"All passengers of the *Cocaigne*—stand by to return to ship! All passengers of the *Cocaigne*—"

Well, it was just his line, everybody thought. Then I saw Hen Crake, and I said, "Got the money, Mr. Crake? It's Wednesday all day today. Or anyways, till today noon, what the contract you signed says."

"Fret your gizzard, Dove, and get sand in your crop," said he, sitting comfortable, and watching the *Cocaigne* from under the lid of his hard hat.

There were doings out there as usual. The sand-sucker had its big pipe down beside the ship and was sucking away, and the pontoons were laying alongside. On the roof of the sand-sucker a lady was hanging out the wash like in her own backyard, which made it look even more like a house. The tugs were out to the sea, getting together.

"Mr. Jason Dasey Dove here?" said a cultured voice.

I gave a look and saw nine gentlemen, shaved and shined and in their Sunday clothes, coming up the porch.

"Meaning I, friends?" said I, culturing my voice. "Greetings!"

"Glad to meet you, Mr. Dove," said the long-legged party in the lead. "My name is Fred Fish, President of the Village of Koch's Landing."

"Mr. Dove, meet our board of trustees —Mr. Ad. Mills, Mr. Jerry Foley, Mr. Charles Bewley. Shake hands with Nate Adams, our Fire Commissioner—police commissioner—our counsel—village clerk —tax department. We are here this morning to meet Koch's Landing's wealthiest and most prominent citizen. Outside of Hen Crake—hello, Hen."

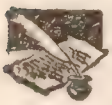
"Oh, it's the government," said I pleasantly. "Yes, I heard about some people starting a government. Well, it's a nice clean business and I hope you make a million. It's not much of a town that can't support one good government."

"Koch's Landing, Mr. Dove," said President Fish, "is the fastest growing

town in the State. To give you an idea, a week ago it had only eight men all told, and now it's got a population of upwards of thirty-eight thousand, though most of them are sleeping in their cars along the road yet. And an all-year attraction unsurpassed.

"Atlantic City won't be knee-high inside a month. Our counsel is getting up zoning laws now, laying out all this beach for big hotels, a broadwalk, a steel pier and an elephant, and soon's he has the law on who own the *Cocaigne*, us or them, we'll run a bridge out to her and charge a quarter. Think what that'll do to the taxes!

"See you're having an anniversary dinner," said President Fish as the government walked in my hotel. "Put the village of Koch's Landing down for nine tickets, and maybe the wives."



JUST then Hen Crake got up and said, "Well, Dove, all set to take my money and sell back the hotel?

"A hundred thousand dollars," said Hen Crake, looking at the contract he signed. "Says so right there, don't it? It's money, that is."

"You're good for it, Mr. Crake," said An. "They say you have the first dollar you made running rum on this beach, and it is up to a million."

"No, it wasn't no million, young lady," said he, "but it was a sight more than this. Where's the contractor? You get all your money, Matt?"

"All we had, Mr. Crake," said I. "We played ball with you like we promised."

"And I got to pay you that back too, hey?" said he, stalling along. Well, it was only nine o'clock and he had up to noon to unbelt.

"All passengers of the *Cocaigne!*"

"The *Cocaigne*—look!"

"She's moving!"

Everybody ran out on the porch. I chinned myself on the transom and looked over the heads of the visiting government and caught the *Cocaigne*, and it was sad but true. She was moving. She was turning around for the sea.

"A little earlier than I figured they could do it," said Hen Crake, looking at the clock. "Tide ain't full till noon. Well, guess I'll be pulling the hook, Dove. Wish you luck with the hotel. It's yourn. I ain't buying."

"What do you mean you ain't buying, Mr. Crake?" said I. "A deal's a deal; you can't run out. Don't it say right here in the contract you signed you must give us a hundred grand for the hotel?"

"Folks," said he, smiling, "you and me got no argument. I owe you; it's on the paper. Only I ain't got it!

"You can see common sense, folks. Brother Sim and me was afraid the po-lice would fuss with us accounting the guests we had in our hotel; so we needed a good sea boat. When we seen your ad it was just what we wanted. Then we was afraid you would fuss with us about selling you the hotel. So we got together every dollar Crake brothers had and we put it on the *Argo* and off it went.

"And there it is yet, folks. And I been up and down and fifty mile out looking for her. You want your money, folks, you get a diver. It's on the *Argo*."

"All passengers of the *Cocaigne*—"

The *Cocaigne* blew her whistle and it shivered right through An and I and we looked at each other and then we looked for Hen Crake; but he was already in his car and leading the parade that was starting back to the United States.

CHAPTER IV

ARGO'S RETURN

WELL, An Huck and I were feeling aghast as we stood on the porch of our Sapphire Hotel and watched our sea-going guests climbing in the boats and getting rowed back to the *Cocaigne*, that

"You asked for it," I said.

was now waiting a half mile out.

An and I might be dumb, or one of us, but it was easy seeing that the little old Sapphire Hotel had fell over backwards into the depression again.

Some guest had lammed for the boat and left a pair of opera-glasses. I looked through them, and there was Mimi Ducray and Bugs Dunn the famous sports writer standing at the rail of the *Cocaigne*. I could see Mimi's big black eyes and she was thinking of her and I on the upper deck in the moonlight at the mask ball only a couple of days ago and remembering old times when she was Miss Coney Island at the Mardi Gras and I was Ogre O'Gara and up in the lights and money and I took her sailing on my yacht the *Argo* on Sheepshead Bay.

Well, it is my experience as a man that a man might have unrequited love but never the sex, and seeing Mimi like that I got to requiting her and I went in to the desk to send her a nice letter by the last boat saying how I wished I was with her.

"Mr. Jason Dasey Dove?"

It was one of the ship's officers off the *Cocaigne,* and he had come in the power-boat around to the Cove side of my hotel to chase up any last stragglers. He had a note for me from Bugs Dunn.

The note said:

> Friend Ogre: About fighting you in the Morning Glory Saturday week. I have a radio from the club and it's got to be yes or no. You might take a pasting, but it's eight grand.
>
> Use the head. Why be found dead in that shanty next spring? Grab your bag and jump in the boat. Mimi wants to say something.
>
> Bugs.
>
> Sweetheart: Please come—yes?
>
> Mimi.

"Hey, An!" cried I. "Give a look!"

She studied over the letter, and then she said, "If this is for you, Jason, since when is that creature calling you sweetheart? Or it can't be for you; it is a mistake."

"It is for me," said I, "but never mind that part, An! Bugs Dunn, who's got a slice of the Morning Glory Athletic Club, offers to fight me for eight grand. So is it yes or no? Where do we stand? Give me your opinion of this so-called hotel. Is it sunk? Will we take to the boats? What do you say?"

"It is for you?" said she, and she dusted the letter off of her fingers to walk away. Excuse me, Mr. Dove, but I got no opinion of what you best do. Except that Mr. Bugs Dunn is a big coward. And I am much obliged for your kind offer, but I am not going with you. Good-by, Mr. Dove; I enjoyed meeting you so much."

"Any answer, Mr. Dove?" said the officer in a hurry.

"The answer," said I, "is: 'No and Regards from all to all!' Hey, An! Listen, An, will you?"

The *Cocaigne* swung up her boats, pulled up the stairs and was on her way. After her went the tugs and the sand-sucker and pontoons.

And all the rest of the customers were heading the other way, for the United States. About a thousand cars that were camped on our beach went for the causeway like water down a sink. The hot dog and hamburger men turned off the gas and corked the mustard, and the souvenir peddlers chased after the cars and offered bargains.

The carpenters that had been working on the new wing of our Sapphire Hotel hiked by with their boxes on their shoulders.

The only guy that kept on working was the sign-painter that had his money in advance, and he was still painting a big sign for An's new real estate development and it said:

> FOR
> NORTH MIAMI ESTATES AND PALM BEACH EXTENSION
> SEE
> HUCK BROKERAGE CORPORATION
> ANEMONE HUCK, PRES.
> EXCLUSIVE AGENTS.

It was a swell sign in three colors with a red hand putting the finger on the hotel to point where President Huck was dealing out the lots. We'd a made a million.

"Well, Dove," said President Fish of the government of Koch's Landing, as he went down the porch steps, "glad to met you, anyways."

"So long, Dove," said the board of trustees, the police commissioner, the fire commissioner, the tax department, the counsel and the village clerk. They got in their cars, took a last look at the smoke of the *Cocaigne* away out, and tailed the parade of cars going over the causeway.

"OH, you didn't go!" said An when I found her.

"Am I such a punk?" said I. "Leaving you here? But speaking of business, how much left in the bucket?"

"It might be three, four hundred. Enough to pay off the help. That darned contractor got it all, Jason."

"Him and Hen Crake are cutting it fifty-fifty somewheres now, I bet. And Hen had fun too. You hear him say at the end that he knew they were going to get the ship off this morning? He never meant to buy the hotel back for a minute, An; he was just after the money we were making."

"Yes, Jason," said she, swallowing her breath. "I know. I did everything wrong. I'm—I'm bad luck to you. You ought to have gone away with your friends."

So I looked through the opera glasses to give her a chance to pull herself together. Things looked somewhat sour, but it wasn't An's fault. She had a wonderful set of brains for a girl, but you couldn't expect her to outsmart a couple of wise boys like the Crake brothers. I did feel a little bad about tossing over that eight grand that I would get if we quit the hotel and went off on the *Cocaigne* with Bugs Dunn, why crab?

There was a sailboat of some kind away out there. A coal or lumber freighter, I guessed.

Yes, thought I, Hen Crake was one smart man. He had took An and I like a couple of babes. Some schooner, thought I; freighting—No, it wasn't a schooner, it was—

"An! Give a look!"

"Why, Jason, what is it? Oh, that little boat. Well—"

"The *Argo!* Don't I know my own yacht? Heading this way. Coming in here, she is."

"Oh Lord," prayed An. "Is it truly the *Argo,* Jason? Oh, if a mean man ever asked for it! Let me think—I can't think—Yes, that's the first thing to do!"

She ran and grabbed the telephone. "The State Police!

"Hello, Police! This is the Sapphire Hotel down on Koch's Cove. Remember you raided this place trying to get the bandits who lived here? And a bunch of them went off to sea on the yacht *Argo* and never heard from?

"Well, the *Argo* is coming in now! Hurry up! Coming?

"Coming," said she, hanging up.

"Good girl!" said I. "Putting the bite on them, hey, An? Good girl!"

"They'll arrest them, all but Sim Crake, and ride them off," said she. "That nice sergeant will do that for me; the way he was looking at me that day he was here, I am sure I can influence him for good. But what about the help?"

"The help, An?" said I. "You are all wrong on that sergeant and he is just a big dwarf, but if he will collar the help too and ride them away, you will be a sterling influence and we will save a week's pay, hah?"

"I will give them their time right now and get them out," said she, taking the money bucket out of the safe and running for the kitchen. "I will give them the bucket too to get them out quick. The Sapphire Hotel is closed!"

Well, I was still figuring that one when An came running back.

"Jason, pile up these tables and chairs! Break some legs. Here, take this sugar-bowl and see can you hit yourself in the sideboard mirror. Go on; throw!"

She certainly had influence with me.

"Well," said I, and I threw the sugar-bowl through the sideboard mirror.

"Grand," said An as the glass and china rained around. "Now push the sideboard back on the tables and chairs. No, no, Jason; that's not how to move a sideboard! Turn it over and over like a trunk. I'll help you lift—up, this side!"

"Oh, like a fire," said I, throwing the sideboard over. "But how do you feel,

An? If you will go upstairs and lay down, I will wring out a nice cold towel—"

"Hurry, Jason! Oh, you're so slow. Run out and bring in boards from the new wing!"

She hoodled me and I dashed for our new wing and brought back a bunch of two-by-fours, and she was waiting on the porch.

"Through the windows, Jason!" said she.

"Will you please open them, An?" said I.

"That is not how I seen alterations," said she. "Dash them right through the glass, Jason. That's how! And leave them half in and half out. Now take the pail and run out where all the tourists were parked on the beach and get a pail of baloney-skins and crusts."

When I brought her back this load of ex-food, she strewed it around on the floor and then she said. "Now some shovels of sand and throw it around."

She took hold of one of the two-by-fours and went to batting at the ceiling. I took the stick off her and gave a few good stiff jabs and down came the ceiling kersmash. I felt quite goofy, but An stood back and held her chin like one of these interior decorators and said, "That is better; much better. It is very effective."

She turned and raced through the doorway. I took after her, afraid she wasn't safe. She ran to where the sign-painter was putting fancy turns and tails on the two big lot-selling schemes that An was going to have when Koch's Cove got her healthy growth.

"Bah!" said she, waving. "Blah! I'm not taking the agency for North Miami Shores and Palm Beach Extension. Seventy-seven-A for them. Help turn it around, Jason, so you can see it from the porch and let it be."

"Got another sign-board, painter, or a roll of paper? A big sign up there alongside the front door, CLOSED FOR ALTERATIONS. And make it quick, please."

The help walked through our new alterations in the dining room and got in their car and headed home. They did not pass any remarks, and that is one thing about hotel help, you can not surprise them much.

There was nobody left but the painter painting his new sign at the doorway, and soon he was through and went off with his artists' tools.

There was nobody left but An and I. An hour before, Koch's Cove looked like July 4 at Brighton, standing-room only, and now there was us—and the *Argo* a mile out.

SHE was rounding the point of beach into the Cove when we saw the cars of the State coppers buzzing over the causeway.

"They're coming in!" said that so-called nice sergeant, peeking through the blinds of a window. "Not a rumble about the *Cocaigne*, hey, Miss Huck? I've tipped the boys.

"Look at them looking. They think they're seeing things. There's Monk Harrigan, Big Mazie, Ice-wagon Larry Ennis —look at them look! Well, you certainly made great changes. Soon's they hit the dock—

"Ready to jump off, boys! Soon's they hit the dock. Collar them and rush them in the wagon."

"Except Sim Crake, Sergeant," said An.

"Except Sim. We got nothing on Sim. On neither of the Crake boys, us or nobody else and never did. The two toughest, slickest boys on this beach—and have they got it! Those days they used to buy and sell it by the shipload. Here they come!"

The *Argo* was swinging to her anchor, and she was one sick yacht. She'd come in under sail, what was left of the sails. And the passengers looked as bad,

starved and dirty; they were getting into the dinghy.

Everybody wanting to be first, they overloaded it, but one of them managed to slap the water hard enough to get them to the dock, and they all piled out.

"Bring back that sharpie!" yelled Sim Crake through dirt and whiskers.

"When I get a drink and some eats," said the rower, going after the rest.

"You might eat, Clarence," said brother Sim, laying a pistol on him, "but it'll fall out, because you won't have no belly. Bring back that sharpie."

At which, wanting to bring them back alive, I and the police jumped off.

"Give me that gun, Sim," said the sergeant, when we had pacified the passengers. They were being hoodled to the cars by the troopers, and they were very tame from being pacified, but more from their sea trip.

"I got a permit on the boat, Nate," said Sim Crake.

"Always have it with you, Sim," said the sergeant, putting Sim's gun in his hip-pocket. "Unless you got a permit on you, it's against the law to shoot anybody at all."

"Sergeant," said I as we walked back to the house, "could I loan that gun off you?" Because An had told me what was in her mind. "Miss Huck and I got business with the Crakes."

"No, sir, I couldn't," said he, turning his cold shoulder. "And anybody takes that gun out of my pocket unbeknownst to me is stealing and can go to jail. . . . If they are caught at it."

"Then I won't ask you for it," said I, taking the gun and putting it into my pocket. "Sarge, you are a white guy, and anybody calls you a big dwarf is fibbing. If you happen to miss a gun and I find it, I'll send it right back."

"Hey, don't we eat?" said the prisoners, looking out of the cars. "We want to eat!"

"You'll eat and free," said the sergeant, "in the Rivers-end jail. "Well, Miss Huck," said he to An, holding onto her hand, "I enjoyed meeting you. Any time you're over on the mainland, stop in at the troop depot and ask for Sergeant Nate Woodell. We're out to do all we can for the public and show courtesies, particularly to a young lady traveling alone—'By, Dove."

Sim Crake came around the corner of the hotel looking like a woodchuck.

"Hello, Mr. Crake," called I affably.

"Got a drink, Dove?" said he. "And a bite?"

"Come right in, Mr. Crake," invited An. "'Can it be you are hungry? I will fix up a fine dinner. Will you have a nice baked bluefish, or a broiled mackerel, or a fried weakfish, or—"

"Fish," said he. "Fish! Young woman, I was born and raised on fish, and I near to died on fish. Fish and water. Yesterday it was bunkers; I ate bunkers; smelly, greasy bunkers. Tpf-uh! Fish and water."

"Fish and water, Mr. Crake?" said An. "And I always thought fish and water went together. I'll cut you some sandwiches."

And this was now twenty after eleven on Wednesday, the day Crake brothers were to buy the hotel off us for a hundred thousand dollars cash money, as all written out and signed by Hen Crake in the papers laying right there on the desk.

THAT man was hungry and thirsty. He sat on a chair I hadn't piled up and broke and he downed bread and meat, snapping. And he would treat himself to a swig of whiskey and water from the tumbler alongside of his chair. He just ate and drank and paid no attention.

Then he lit a cigarette and looked around, snoring through his nose. He looked up at the broken ceiling, and he looked at the messy floor and he gazed on the two-by-fours pushing in through the broken windows.

"I see," said he, "you're making great improvements."

"We just had to do something, Mr.

Crake," said An, with a baby blue stare. "The way the guests were rushing in on us, it was something awful. Hundreds and hundreds every day. More! Right after the papers printed about the undesirable guests that the police ran out of the Sapphire.

"Twenty or thirty people sleeping in here and on the porch on those army cots for three a night. Well, nobody could sleep in the bar with the drinking and toasting, even if they could get in, it was so full night and day. We had four bartenders."

Well, she couldn't tell him anything that sounded like such bare-faced story-telling; only he could look around and see that it was the real McCoy. So he was a little dumfounded.

"What kept you away so long, Mr. Crake?" asked I. "We missed you terrible, we and the police. Pleasure cruising?"

"Not pleasure," said he. "We was blowed to helengone. Gas give out; sails blowed out; we been getting back sense."

"Is not that your brother's hat you're wearing, Mr. Crake? Yes, I thought it was his hat, and I never seen a man so worried when you didn't come back that night. But why did not some ship pick you up? You must have blowed past plenty ships."

"We sighted them first, Dove. Guess you know now the boys wasn't asking to be picked up. They'd rather drink rain and eat bunkers."

The telephone rang and An took it up and said, "Yes, he is, but he has stepped out, so call back in ten minutes." And she hung up and said, "Mr. Dove, take that axe and chop that telephone wire, please. The other day Mr. Dove was on that wire a half hour—people calling up from all over. They'll just have to understand we can't be annoyed. People seem to think because it is a hotel and they have plenty money, they can come right in, but we are particular. Wouldn't you be, Mr. Crake? Oh, pardon me."

"Guests?" said he. "What guests? Where from?"

"Oh, they were nice people," said An, bringing the register. "I am not faulting them for that. Give a look, Mr. Crake. Any of them ever patronize here before?

"That's the Governor of Oklahoma, Mr. and Mrs.— That's the Attorney-General and his boys Stamford and Fairfield. And you know Bernie Musquash, the great Olympic swimmer.

"Here are some snapshots, Mr. Crake; don't you love snapshots? Here's the front porch at cocktail hour. And take a look at the beach and the bathing; three thousand cars parked out there last Sunday. Well, you see, we simply have to close down till we can rebuild. That extension of forty rooms should help some for the present."

"Why—why ain't you working at it now?"

"Oh, we had some little local contractor and he wanted us to pay him more money or he wouldn't go on. Tried to hold us up. Here's his name on the agreement. Know him, Mr. Crake?"

"Matt Griper," read brother Sim. "I know him, sure. He's a thief."

"Oh, I'm so glad you think so. But you're right, Mr. Crake; we got to get a move on or the season will be over. Mr. Dove, take that axe and break up the kitchen stove and throw it out the back door; the new electric ranges are due any time."

"We got to get busy!" said I, and I went in the kitchen and crashed the stove with the axe.

Sim Crake was hard to believe. He went upstairs and looked in the rooms, and he came down and went out on the porch and looked at the beach, the new dance pavilion, all the pretty sun-umbrellas and folding chairs and the new cabanas and all this and that.

He was nobody's fool, but the facts were against him. He navigated around like a wise old crow around a barn looking for the gun sticking out somewheres.

One point was, he and brother Hen never run the Sapphire for the public but only by invitation under cover, and he didn't know what it might do, silly as it looked.

"What—what's that stuff about a dinner up there?"

"The big anniversary dinner, account of the yacht race that's coming here from New York, Mr. Crake. Here's their letter.

"Mighty lucky we didn't sell out to your brother Hen. Yes, Mr. Hen Crake wanted to buy the hotel back from Mr. Dove in the worst way, but he didn't have the money. And it's too late for him now."

"Hen wanted—Go away. What would Hen want with it?"

"Unless he wanted to make some money, Mr. Crake; might that be it? Mr. Dove didn't imagine what a gold mine he had at first, and he let your brother talk him into agreeing to sell back the hotel for only a hundred thousand dollars. Look, here's the contract that Mr. Hen Crake signed, and he was to put up the money by noon today. There's the deed all signed and ready, but Crake brothers weren't ready, lucky for Mr. Dove. No, Mr. Hen Crake didn't have the money; here's a bad check he gave us to make the bargain."

"It'd be bad, yes, yes," said Sim Crake, looking. "Being there was nothing in the bank. A hundred thousand dollars! I'll ring Hen. Here, the telephone is—You wait till I get Hen!"

"Oh, no, we won't wait, Mr. Crake," said An. "Fair is fair. The contract says you people are to have the money here by twelve o'clock today and it's five of twelve now."

SIM CRAKE went pale. He looked at Hen's name on the contract and the rubber check. He looked at me like murder and he looked at the clock.

Swearing a curse, he turned around and lammed for the door. He went past a broken window at sixty mile and then he was tearing out on the dock.

"An," said I, "you suppose he really got the money with him, like Hen Crake said?"

An sat down and lit up a cigarette.

"Maybe, Jason. That's what Hen Crake told us this morning; he said Crake brothers' bankroll went off to sea on the *Argo*. Of course, we know he tells stories, but I do think that maybe this time—"

Sim Crake came lamming back.

He had the old satchel that he went off with on the *Argo*, and he yanked it open and started to snatch out money.

"Fork over that deed, young fellow! It ain't twelve o'clock yet, and here's Crake brothers' cash!"

Sim Crake stacked up the money on the table till it would make an armless man reach, and then An pulled one. If you might have noticed it, the sex are the world's greatest gamblers.

"That's a hundred thousand even, Mr. Crake," said she, "but what about the seven thousand dollars Mr. Dove spent building up the hotel? Your brother Hen agreed to pay Mr. Dove that back too, and fair is fair."

"Now, An," said I. And I got kicked—could that flyweight blonde kick!

"But maybe we can arrange something about that, Mr. Crake, if Mr. Dove would like to have the *Argo* back. Would you, Mr. Dove? How much do you want for the *Argo*, Mr. Crake?"

Sim Crake gave a loving glance at all the money.

"That boat's worth thirty thousand!"

"Yes, but Mr. Dove is talking cash. He'll give you ten."

"Make it fifteen," said Sim Crake.

"Sold!" said I. "Never mind, An; let it go."

"Then Mr. Crake gets back eight thousand of this hundred," said An, disgusted with me. "Write Mr. Dove a line

saying 'Sold yacht *Argo* to Jason Dove,' and sign it. Yes, that will do. I hope you make a million on the hotel, Mr. Crake."

"I hope the *Argo* drowns you," said Sim Crake from the bottom of his heart. "Now you wait here till I go get Hen."

"Yes, Mr. Crake," said An. "We'll all be sitting here till you come back with your brother. And won't he be happy! Want us to mind the rest of your money till you get back?"

"You'll get minded if it all ain't right," promised Sim Crake, picking up his satchel. He went walking for the causeway and then he began to run.

An jumped up.

"Out of here, Jason! Get that barrel of gas in our electric plant. Never mind our clothes—the money—and gas! No, I'll bring the money; hurry, Jason!"

"They'll get nasty," agreed I, grabbing up two pails in the kitchen and lamming for the new barrel of gas in the little house where we made our own juice.

I filled up the pails and ran down the wharf, and An rowed them out to the *Argo,* while I went back for more pails. I went out and got the cap of the *Argo's* tank off and slopped the gas in.

An and I were in the engine-room, coaxing the twin Spalls motors. They hadn't fired since the night of the big wind; would they hit now? I turned her over.

"She lives!"

Well, anybody would grab hold of anybody and give them a hug and kiss, wouldn't they? That's human nature and I often notice I got a little of it in myself.

"Ninety-two grand and the old *Argo* back again!" smiled I as we dashed through the inlet and put out for the Statue of Liberty. "Well, that is somewhat better than going to New York and fighting that punk, hey, An?"

"I do not know what is a punk, Jason," said she, "but that is just what Mr. Bugs Dunn is. The coward, wanting a delicate boy like you to fight him."

"Me fight Bugs Dunn?" said I. "Why not in the least, An! Bugs was going to fight me I couldn't fight anybody. I got no club; if I had a club I could fight boys. Bugs Dunn's got a big club. Understand me now? Oh, you don't; no, you don't. An, who was it rung up the Sapphire before I cut the wire?"

"Hen Crake. He saw the *Argo* coming in and he wanted his brother Sim to talk to him, so I made believe somebody wanted to talk to you."

"Well, brother Sim is talking to him now, I venture to guess," said I, looking behind us. "Listen, An, if they come out after us and want the money back, is it all right for us to say no?"

"Positively, Jason," said she. "Crake Brothers agreed to buy the hotel, didn't they? Well, now they bought it."

"That's our story, hah?" agreed I. "Well, you best do the talking, because I am not such a good talker and they might talk me out of it. Because here they come."

THAT swell little sea-skiff of Hen Crake's was coming out from the ex-fish factory between two big waves, going about thirty miles, and I looked in the opera glasses and there was Hen Crake and brother Sim.

"If they try to take that money off us again, we will get a lawyer, Jason!" said An. "He will get the money."

"Yes, that is my experience of a lawyer too," said I. "Well, I would rather see them get the money than the Crakes, but first we will try to keep it for ourself, hey?"

I went down in the cabin and came back, and she said, "What are you doing to your bad thumb? Does it hurt?"

"No, but it might," said I, winding tape. And I looked at the sea-skiff and I hailed, "Hello, Mr. Crake! Ahoy! Hello, Sim! Looking for bunkers?"

Sim Crake shoved the skiff under our quarter and Hen Crake came aboard like an eel under the rail, and I went to help him and gave him a little reefing to see if he had a gun, but he didn't. So while Sim Crake was tying up to us, Hen Crake stood up and said, "Young fellow, we come for that money."

"I am glad you brought it up, Mr. Crake," said I, "because Miss Huck and I were just talking that over. Right just now, were we not, Miss Huck?"

"Well?" said he, swelling his shoulders.

"Well," said I, "we will keep the money. Won't you sit down? Yes, we have decided to let the matter drop."

With that he telegraphed that he was going to take a punch, and it was good he wired ahead, because he threw one at me that would have sunk Schmeling, though only if delivered. I mean he leaned down and picked this punch off the deck, and it landed with a power that broke the siding in my wheelhouse, and Miss Huck screamed in the delusion that the wheelhouse was me.

"My goodness gracious," said I, while Hen Crake was pulling his punch back out of my wheelhouse. "Yes, An? Please don't, Mr. Crake; you don't know your strength. Won't you sit down and discuss arguments?"

One great thing I did not want to do was to broil with these boys, because they were just a couple of spectators and there is no percentage in cuffing spectators. Sticks and stones, Dovey, I would often say when some spectator would pass mean remarks, will break your bones but names will never hurt you! And besides, An said prize-fighting was low pleasure and I was not letting her know I was in the game from sixteen.

So I kept talking and commanding the power of the human voice and also running, and if it was only Hen Crake all would pass off pleasantly, because I knew places to hide that he couldn't crawl in after me. But the trouble was brother Sim.

An let out another cry and I turned around. It seems Sim Crake came aboard, wishing to slow me up with a spare tiller. Well, he was taking one strike at me when An lept at him and he gave her a fling.

Well, I never seen anybody fling An before, and it acted on me like rubbing me the wrong way in the ring when I am only giving an exhibition of the manly art. As we are all friends and it won't go any further, I will say that I am fond indeed of socking guys if I start socking from being rubbed the wrong way. So I flat-footed up to brother Sim and I shoved my right to the wrist in his whiskers, but keeping off the button because he flung An, and if you sock a guy on the button it is just turning off the lights.

"You would," said I, beginning to cry, because I always cry like a baby when I want to tear guys open, and I shoved in the left to the elbow. I mean the punch went right through to the elbow, but brother Sim was going too and he threw up his dogs and landed on his cow-lick.

I turned around and caught Hen Crake in the act of throwing another house-breaker. I should lift an elbow for that big punk! I bobbed and let it slip around my neck and I brought one up that split his mouth and pointed his nose to the sea-gulls.

"Asked for it, didn't you?" said I, socking him. "You knew I was Ogre O'Gara and you come here to show me up before the girl, didn't you?" And I socked him.

Well, it was just hitting two bags and I could set for every punch. Oh, they tapped me a few too, but I rolled them off when I was too busy to duck, and I only took one roundhouse swing between the eyes and a dive. Well, the reason I soaked up that roundhouse was because I was just making Sim Crake jump overboard; and then there was only Hen Crake with a face like a butcher-shop,

though very wild, and I rolled away from his kick at me and got up and feinted him around so his back was to the stern, where there was no rail. I threw one then that went in and exploded inside, and he was with the angels long enough for them to throw him over the stern.

I loosed his painter and threw it after him, and sat down and lit up and watched them getting back in their skiff and falling fast behind as the *Argo* kept on for Sheepshead Bay. I had lashed the wheel when the Crakes came on.

But I want to tell you what hurt me worse than both the Crakes was the look An gave me. I could read her like a book, and I could read her saying, "So that's what you are; a prize-fighter. And I thought you were such a gentleman." She gave a low cry of horror and ran down in the galley.

WELL, Dovey, thought I, you have made a nice spectacle of yourself now, losing your dirty temper and brutalizing spectators, and she is off you from now on.

I could only look out of my eyes, they were so swoll, and I was looking back there at the Crake brothers calling it a day and going back into Koch's Cove, and An came up behind me and put a hand over my eyes and said like a broken-hearted angel, "Oh, my poor darling, there is no hamburger."

"Hungry, An?" said I. "Oh, for my eyes! Well, I will fix them with my penknife. It is my hands are worse. Bum hands is one big reason I quit the ring, and now I got them."

We went in the wheelhouse and An held the wheel, because I could not close my hands good.

"Well, An," said I, "it is no use deluding. I was in the ring from quite a child, and I only quit two-three years ago on account of I had plenty and also account of hands, mine and some others. And I know what you think of fighters."

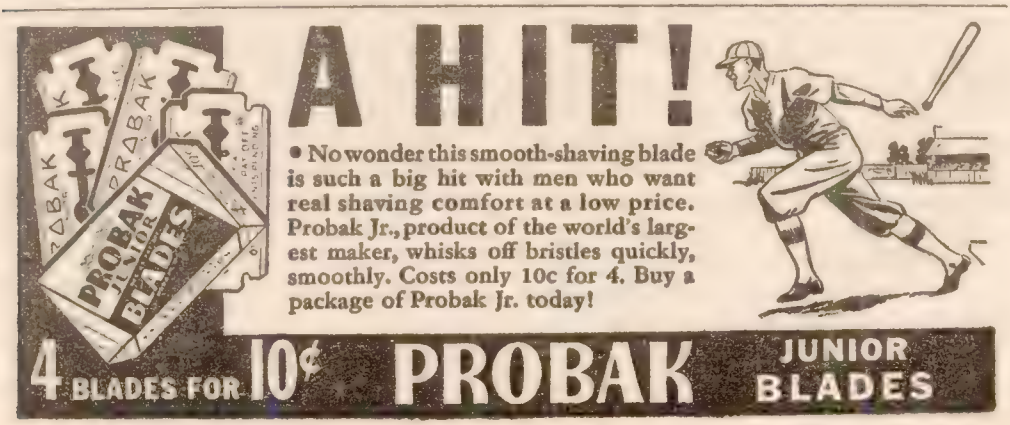
"Jason," said she, with a strange stare, "were you truly one of those creatures in human form, fighting like a wild beast and knocking out teeth and mashing noses and dashing blood?"

"Words to that effect, An," said I, sobbing somewhat. I loved that girl.

"Dreadful. With thousands cheering and the reeking human brutes fighting like Roman alligators in the arena? Jason!"

"Well, the gate was thirty-eight thousand when I went ten rounds to no decisions with the champ and busted my hands. I could always sock, but an alligator is just what he was, and all bones. In the seventh I broke his cheekbone and cracked my thumb."

"Frightful!" An shuddered. "Go on and tell me. And kiss me, Ogre. Kiss me."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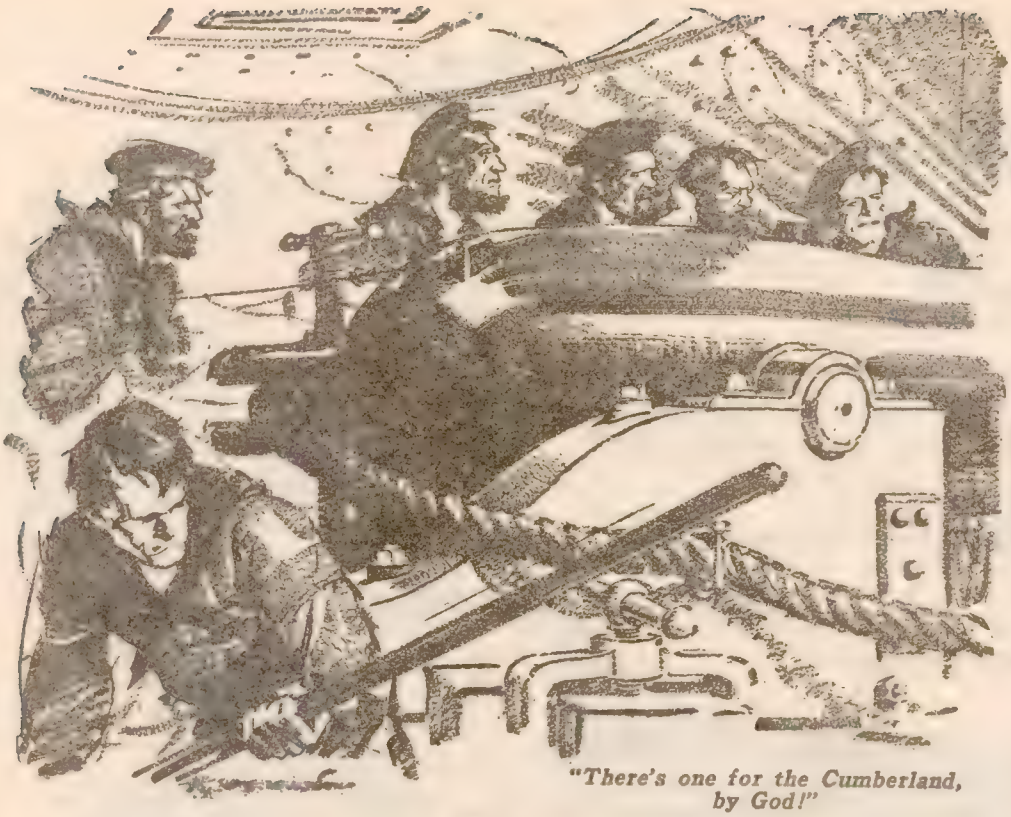


"There's one for the Cumberland, by God!"

IRON COFFINS

By H. Bedford-Jones

GIDEON PARR, Gloucester fisherman by trade and Navy man by vocation, perched on the 'midships rail of the Federal sloop *Cumberland* while he stitched up a tear in his clean pair of pants, as preparation for Sunday inspection on the morrow. He had learned to be fore-handed in these small matters. Navy discipline seemed to bear heavily on trifles.

Noon was approaching; as Parr plied the needle and listened to the gab of his mates, he drank in the glorious view with complacent satisfaction that he was not soldiering afar. Here, off the mouth of the James, lay the *Cumberland;* the sailing frigate *Congress* lay to the east of Newport News Point. On farther were the *St. Lawrence* and the steam frigates *Minnesota* and *Roanoke,* with tenders and gunboats all aglitter in the sunlight. The Newport News fort and battery flew the Union flag; the Confederate flag splotched the blue sky southward across the Roads.

"Dull work, this here blockade," said Randall, gun captain in the starboard battery. "Nobody gets out, nobody gets in. We got them Secesh bottled up proper. Wisht I was back six months out o' Bedford and cuttin' in."

Randall was a New Bedford whaler, when he was working.

"All lines out and nary a bite," and Parr scratched bare ankle with bare toe. "And here I set sewing a pair o' britches!

Ain't much to brag of, bein' a bluejacket for Uncle Sam. I'd better be on the cod banks."

"Yeah. Ruther be fast to blubber in half a gale than fast to this mud in the doldrums, condemn it!" Randall spat over the rail. "If this is puttin' down the rebellion, we'll all grow barnacles on our starns. Looks like a lot o' smoke, up Norfolk way."

Another man spoke up eagerly. "Mebbe that iron-plated hulk's comin' out. Last we heard the plaguey contraption turn out so heavy she couldn't be navigated."

Randall grunted. "That darky who come aboard yesterday heard some talk about her. She's walled up with two foot of timbers and four inches of iron. Broadsides o' ten rifled guns and Dahlgrens, countin' the pivots. And her engines can move her, he allows."

"She's had the dare and ain't come out; that's proof enough." Parr stitched his final lap and cut the thread with his sheath knife. He squinted across the water. "Now I reckon I can stand my Sunday—hey! Smoke is right. S'pose she's a-coming? No signals from the flagship."

"Aw, that *Merrimac* ain't showing up," somebody scoffed. "Her plates won't hold ag'in ten-inch solid shot! The *Cumberland* could sink her with one broadside while she's wallering, or them steam frigates could stand off and pour a ton of iron into her. The newspapers claim we got an ironclad a-building ourselves, up to Long Island."

"Well, give me wood under me," said Parr. "If we go down, I want a chanct to ride a piece o' wreckage. You can't ride no durned iron plate."

Randall nodded. "Same here. No iron coffin for me, afloat or ashore! Say, dummed if that smoke ain't comin' out'n the *Elizabeth!*"

"By glory, it is! It's her!" exclaimed someone.

A gun boomed from Fort Monroe. Men leaped to their feet, gazing and pointing. Lieutenant Morris—the commander was aboard the flagship—came leaping from below and hung in the shrouds with his glass.

"It's her!" came from the foretop. "Looks like the peaked roof of a house above water. Two gunboats with her, and a mess o' small craft trailing."

"Clear ship for action!"

MESS was forgotten. The *Cumberland's* signal gun mingled with an echoing alarm from the *Congress* and the other ships. The bos'n piped, fife and drums beat to stations; all hands jumped to work. Parr, with the rest of Randall's gun crew, crowded at the open port of the ten-inch Dahlgren, staring.

The *Congress* had triced up her ports and was exchanging signals with the *Roanoke*, as she hauled shorter on her cables. The *St. Lawrence* was showing a glimmer of canvas, the stack of the *Minnesota* was belching smoke, and tugs were making for the *Roanoke*, which had a broken shaft. The ironclad was a long time coming, however; word of her was passed along the gun-deck.

"She's out o' the river!"

"Roundin' Sewall's Point now. Damned if she ain't just a floatin' roof, like a henhouse in a freshet!"

The thing surged into Parr's view, with two steam canal boats, serving as gunboats, churning paddles in her wake, and a flock of small craft hovering at safe distance. There was nothing to her but a peaked roof, a belching smokestack, and the Confederate flag above her unseen bows. Now she swung to the westward as though heading for the *Congress*, but with a slow and deadly deliberation. Likely enough she could not hurry if she wanted to, and this lent her slow approach a more implacable air.

"Going to pay a call on us first," went

up the word. "Hurrah! We'll fix her!"

The port in her blunt forward casemate opened; the bow gun poked its long snout through. The ports in her slanting starboard side opened and were punctuated by round circles. She meant business.

Parr wet his dry lips. Standing with his swab in hand, he cast a glance aft along the gun deck. Randall was squinting over the smooth taper of the Dahlgren; the crews were all in position. A serried line of bully mates, grouped about the sleek breeches of the guns—lock lanyards, buckets, tackle ropes, rammers and spongers all in hand. Stripped to the waist, some of them; bearded in black-brown and red, round *Cumberland* caps jaunty on their heads—

"By gosh, she *is* comin' for us!" said somebody, in a gasping, incredulous voice.

Parr turned, started to see how close she was. That crawling ironclad loomed large and black, a peaked roof sweeping the water, her sunken hull invisible. The ends of that roof were slightly rounded, to enable her guns to pivot, quartering. There was nothing to shoot at save the slanting sides and rounded ends.

The *Cumberland* quivered and shook as her after guns bellowed. Parr saw water spout against the monster's side; as the echoes rumbled the ringing clang of solid shot upon metal drifted in. A roar and the *Congress* began to fire in full broadside. A big gun of the shore battery was blasting away. The *Merrimac* paid no attention, but suddenly she gushed smoke. The sound of the ripping, rending balls could be heard. Then Parr looked no more, but leaped to work.

"Fire!"

The *Cumberland* staggered to the recoil of her guns. Small arms were at work also. The dull reverberating clang of metal from the monster never ceased. The gun crews worked like mad to reload. Parr plied his swab in the bore; the Dahlgren was loaded and run out again and again. Amid the drifting smoke, voices were heard.

"Ain't nothing to sink her! She's had iron enough to smash her long ago!"

"Ain't a fair fight, I tell you! She'll do for the *Congress* and then come for us—"

"Hey, look at the shot strike her! So hot it smokes her iron—watch it sizzle!"

"Quit gamming and serve the gun," barked Randall. "Move, damn it! Move!"

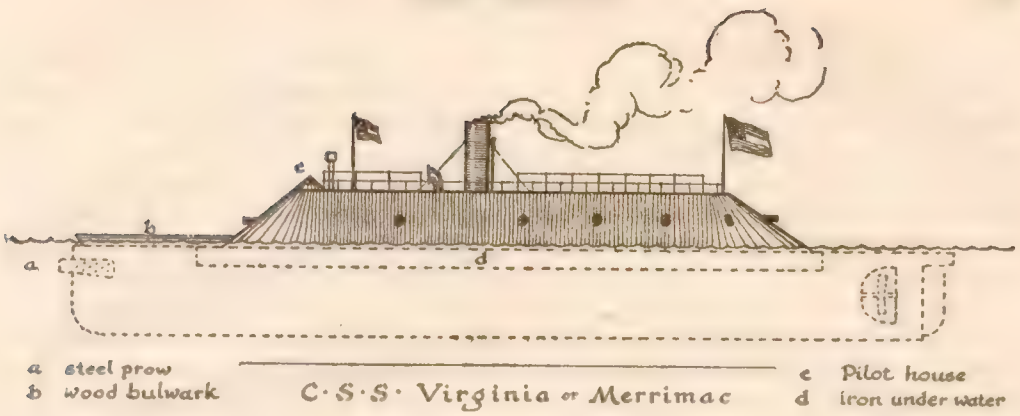
Almost abeam of the smoke-wrapped *Congress* the *Merrimac* ceased firing and left the two gunboats to engage the *Congress* while she bore deliberately on. Shouts were passed along the gun-deck: three more armed steamers were coming down the James. The *Roanoke* and the *St. Lawrence* had gone aground in the ebb tide. Things began to look bad.

And here came the *Merrimac* straight for the *Cumberland.* Faster the guns were served, but the balls bounced from her like peas. Parr, with the men around him, grew sick while anger and incredulity battled sheer panic. Why, this contraption of the devil could clean out the whole harbor and the fort to boot!

More and more, the guns must be depressed. A pall of powder smoke lifted all around, but glimpses showed Parr that the *Merrimac* was holding on. Her prow, barely cleaving the ripples, headed straight for the sloop; she moved ponderously, with never a voice, never a sign of crew, an iron monster prowling the surface to kill ships. She was not a stone's throw away now, low and ugly.

"By God, she'll ram us! Hurry up, there—" The broadside roared. "Stopped her!"

No. She had slewed briefly, as though staggered by that weight of driven iron clanging into her, but now she came on again. Parr, leaning half out of the port to ply his swab, suddenly saw her right



beneath him, huge in the sulphurous eddies. He saw the saucer-like dents in her plating, saw her bow port open and the gun-snout slide out. He caught a wild storm of yells from gun deck and upper deck.

"Look out! She's ramming us!"

ALL in the flash of a split second, while he was still swabbing away. He was done for, he knew it. That huge gun was almost in his face. It belched flame and smoke, sent its thunderous message smashing through the *Cumberland,* evoked shrieks and cries. Parr shook his fist frantically, leaned farther to yell rage and defiance.

The underwater ram of the *Merrimac* struck the hull of the wooden ship with crashing impact. The *Cumberland* was sent careening on her tautened cables, port rail down. Parr was shaken off like a clinging ant by the shock—his hold gone, he pitched clean out the port. With a frantic, desperately spasmodic attempt to leap clear, he found himself in air, falling. A dizzy smash, and he landed hard, half stunned, unable to move.

Shallow water? No, an ebb-and-flow rush of water, but he was not on any ground. He lay lax amid an infernal clang of iron upon iron, a bursting gunfire that deafened him. Close beside rose a sloping black wall with a black open window—he was on the flush iron deck of the monster! Sharp fragments hurt him as he stirred—fragments of shattered iron. The black window was the bow gun-port of this ironclad, the gun withdrawn.

His momentary paralysis did not last. Obviously, the monster was under heavy fire, and was shuddering to the recoil of her after guns. Ricochetting iron screamed in the air and slashed the water. This open deck, Parr realized with abrupt panic, was no place for him. He scrambled up, to slide overboard and get away—then was halted.

"By cracky, he's alive! Hold on, Yank. Come in here. Quick!"

A grimy, hairy face filled the port above. A long arm jutted out with a revolver.

"You, Yank! Get in out of the rain. Quick!"

Splinters of iron hissed in air. Parr, helpless before that revolver, saw that the *Merrimac* was heading into the James River; her ports were clanging shut. The *Cumberland* was settling by the bow, but her flag was flying, her guns were smoking. The *Congress* was engaged with the gunboats. The *Roanoke, Minnesota* and *St. Lawrence* were all aground now.

"You'll play possum till Gabriel's trump if you don't come here quick—"

A rope sailed from the port, a long arm with sinewy hand reached down. Parr went up the sloping iron at a run, as the line was hauled in. He went up in a slither, too, cursing the iron plates and the tallow that had slushed them down. No wonder the striking balls set off a sizzle!

Then he was caught by wrist and shirt and hair and hauled through the opening. The smoky interior made him think of a Gloucester attic in a fog, except that attics had no splatters of blood, no dead men, no wounded.

"What's your name, Yank?"

"Gideon Parr, of the *Cumberland.*"

"Oh! Thought you was from heaven. Hey, the commodore will want to talk with him. Pass him along."

"No, hold on. Ain't associated with a Yank in a coon's age." Faces gathered around, friendly, grinning, interested. Somebody guffawed. "What d'ye mean by boarding us, Yank?"

"Damn you, I fell out the gunport when you rammed us!" sputtered Parr. There was a burst of laughter.

"You must be iron-plated yourself. How d'ye like the fight, anyhow?"

"Ain't a fight," said Parr. "You wouldn't dast swap broadsides if you weren't all covered up."

More laughter, and he resented it sulkily.

"Well, suh," said an amiable voice, "we out-smarted you Yanks, yes suh! You set fire to your *Merrimac* frigate and scuttled her. We raised her, fitted her out, and we've got a one ship navy that'll whip your whole fleet! How do you like the *Virginia,* suh?"

"What *Virginia?*" demanded the confused Parr.

"This ship, suh—the Confederate ship *Virginia! Merrimac* no more. You're the only Yankee flavor aboard her now."

"We were aground," snapped Parr. "You didn't have to ram us when we couldn't move."

"Yank, we won't argue. You set over yonder and stay put till we get time to think about you. Your ship's sinking, with a hole in her the size of a hogshead. Reckon we're going to touch her up a bit more, just to finish her proper."

The *Merrimac,* or *Virginia,* was turning about, but Parr could see nothing; the ports were all shut. He sat on his hams in the corner indicated, and glowered about miserably. Anyway, they had paid a bit for their fun. Twenty men or more killed or wounded by bullets through the ports, he heard somebody say.

Yes, like an attic, with this peaked seven-foot roof close overhead, gloomy and smothering. The figures of the rebel crew moved, half obscured by smoke. He could hear the voice of the commander from his conning-post—Buck, they called him. Captain Buchanan, somebody said. Bitterly Parr watched the powder-bags and shot being made ready, while the hulk shivered and rumbled to the wrack of her engines.

Orders were passed along. Then men tensed and became silent. Wham-whang! A muffled roar of guns from outside, and then clangors reverberating through the air, the impact of the balls muffled by the thick timbering behind the iron. Once, under a full broadside, Parr felt the monster reel for an instant. It was like a boiler shop, thought Parr in angry disgust; or like a closed attic in a hailstorm with thunder shaking the roof. He began to get a headache. The jar began to shake his very bones.

Suddenly the ports were triced up. Parr leaped to his feet and stared! There was the *Cumberland,* close abeam! Badly gashed, she was down by the bows, but her guns were still smoking. A stir of figures here, and Captain Buchanan was at a port, shouting.

"Haul down your flag!"

"Never!" That was the voice of Lieutenant Morris. "We'll sink alongside—"

Cheers from the *Cumberland* drowned out the words. Then the orders rippled. The guns here began to roar and shake; a broadside poured into the devoted *Cumberland,* and the ironclad passed cumbrously on.

Parr could catch glimpses through the open ports. The *Congress* had slipped her cable and run ashore under the guns of the Newport News battery. He caught sight of the *Minnesota,* grounded. She could wait, gleefully exclaimed the men around, for the tide was on the ebb. They were making for the *Congress* now.

Parr groaned a little and got back into his corner. He had seen enough. This ravaging monster was the boss of the waters, and no mistake about it. He sat down again, and hunched up with his face in his hands and his head splitting with the noise. He could not look at it. It was the end.

The riddled *Congress* was set afire with red-hot shot. The *Cumberland* was sunk to her rails. The *Minnesota* was hard aground and crippled; wary of shoals, the *Merrimac* pounded her at long range. So it was over at last, with the afternoon, and in the dusk the ironclad put about for the Elizabeth River once more, and home.

No one thought of the hapless prisoner who crouched in a dark corner, futile and glowering. Captain Buchanan had been wounded in the thigh; everyone else was in a bubble of fervent high spirits.

A shell bursting in a port had mowed down a few—what matter? The glow of victory had seized all hands.

Voices ran high and furious. Back in the morning, to finish the *Minnesota* and the other two frigates. The *Virginia* had proved herself right nobly! There was hot, eager talk of going up the Potomac, of calling on Abe Lincoln, of throwing shells into Washington. Why, the war was won right here—the blockade would be broken up in no time!

BEHIND Sewell's Point, the victorious ironclad came to anchor. The shore and the river channel were in a blaze of incoherent, frenzied celebration. Cheers, bonfires, lanterns waving, mingled with the firefly lights of small craft circling around. Guests stormed aboard.

Officers and crew kept open house in celebration. No one remembered the forlorn Yank who was carefully keeping out of the way. Gradually, the promenade grating stretched fore and aft was thinned of its visitors. The weary crew began to seek sleeping quarters. In the darkness, not a soul observed the figure that quietly slid through a port and vanished alongside. And no one observed the visiting skiff that gently slipped away on the current and merged in the obscurity.

"Thank the good lord!" said Gideon Parr devoutly, as he chanced upon a basket of food and drink. Somebody had been out to see the fun, well supplied, and the remains were all that could be desired, especially by a man who had not eaten since morning. Not to mention the whiskey. There was not much of it left, but it was sufficient to merge all the bitterness of Parr's spirit in contentment, and to put all his inhibitions to rest, and to waken in him what he had forgotten.

"My clean pants, by gosh!" he thought suddenly. "These are a mess. If I can just slip aboard the old *Cumberland,* now, I could get my clean ones. All mended up, too. Why, it's easy done. Let the current take me—"

He finished off the whiskey, plopped the bottle overboard — and then stretched out as a challenge came through the obscurity. Those dratted rebels! Sentries all along the shore and the batteries, of course. No risking the oars yet awhile, until he had drifted well outside the point.

All the Roads were black, except for

the riding lights of the *Minnesota,* and the redly mounting glare of the doomed *Congress,* staining the distant water and the northern horizon with blood, like an omen of disaster to come. The wide current was swinging him slowly but surely along. No need of working yet. He knew where the *Cumberland* lay.

He was safely away and very glad indeed of it. Then the lurid horizon burst with a flood of crimson. The sullen boom of a volcanic blast rolled across the waters, as the magazine of the burning frigate let go.

The flames winked lower, and the fitful beacon died out. Parr got out his oars and fell to work. His nether garments were badly torn, stiffened with tallow and grease, most uncomfortable; that clean pair of pants aboard the *Cumberland* beckoned invitingly. That they might be extremely wet just now, did not occur to him at all.

Feebly misted lights and a dark hull swung into his view ahead. The set of the current was carrying him straight for the *Minnesota*—she was doomed to follow the *Congress* with morning. He jerked quickly at an oar and pulled hard to round her, but eyes and ears were keen aboard there.

"Boat ahoy! What do you want?"

"Nothing," sang out Parr. No *Minnesota* for him! "Aiming to report aboard the *Cumberland.*"

He leaned on his oars to clear her as far as possible. He pulled hard and fast. Without the least warning, he discerned something in the night, looming blackly; then came a swift crashing shock that lifted him off the thwart and rolled him headlong into the bows. The skiff remained aslant, bows grounded high.

Feet scuffed and pounded, voices rang alarm. In the misty gloom, figures thronged about the skiff. A lantern shed light as Parr scrambled dizzily to his feet.

"Tumble up, you!" A bearded face, a leveled revolver, and Parr stared with slack jaw.

About him were ghosts in pea-jackets, but very much in the flesh. A chill, flat iron deck eighteen inches above the water, broken amidships by a huge round affair.

"What the devil is this?" gasped Parr. "What craft is it?"

"The Union ironclad *Monitor.* You hailed the *Minnesota* and then you rammed us, matey. Here comes the lieutenant. You talk to him."

Parr saluted the uniform and stammered out something of his story.

"Your skiff's stove in and useless," said the officer. "The *Cumberland* is sunk, and you can report ashore at Newport after we've finished with this *Merrimac* craft, or we can put you aboard the *Minnesota.*"

"But you—you weren't here today, sir" Parr was incredulous, doubtful.

"We just arrived from Brooklyn this evening. Well, what shall we do with you?"

"I aim to fight, sir, but the *Minnesota* ain't got a chance. I got away from the Rebs. Then you got in my way. Now I'm ketched 'twixt wind and water."

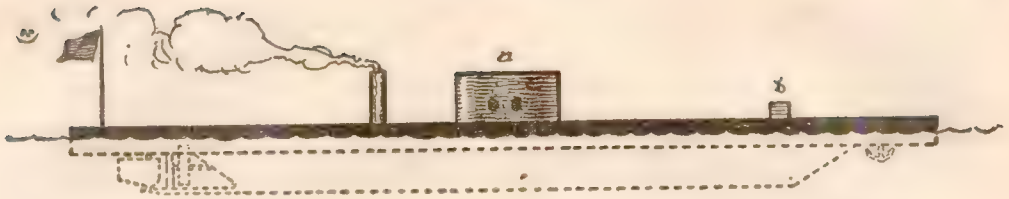
"We're all volunteers aboard here. You can be of use if you want to stay."

"Well, sir," and Parr collected his confused senses, "that's what I aimed to do, I guess. Yes, sir. I'd like to, fine."

"Good. You'll be assigned to duty in the morning."

Parr stretched out with the men. A few were inclined to talk—not many, in spite of the fact that his curiosity about this craft was matched by theirs about the day's fight they had missed. They had slept little for forty-eight hours.

They had been towed out of New York, with a sweeping gale all the way down the coast, seas washing over the turret, officers and men nearly suffocated. Damned glad to sleep here on deck tonight.



"This craft? Lieutenant Worden in command, Lieutenant Greene executive officer—the one just now here. Whip the *Merrimac*? Of course. For God's sake close your hatch and let a man sleep, won't you?"

Parr slept like a log, until the squeal of the bos'n's pipe wakened him.

DAYLIGHT, realization, and a slowly gathering dismay—these welcomed him back to the world, as the black outlines of the *Monitor* sharpened in the gray light. He swallowed hard as he stared at her.

A flat deck like a rounded wedge, all clear except for the squat tower amidships, a squat pair of iron smokestacks abaft it, a companion pair of blower pipes, and the pilot's peep-house forward. A dinky craft, overshadowed by the *Minnesota*. A coffin for sure, with men under deck and hatches battened down, and the *Merrimac* pounding her and climbing over her with that ramming beak—ah! Parr suddenly remembered something he had heard last night aboard the ironclad.

"Where are your guns?" Parr demanded of the men around, as he blinked and peered.

"In that turret, matey. Two 'leven-inch Dahlgrens. Slewed over to port now."

"Gawd Almighty! What if the Rebs don't accommodate you by showin' on that side?"

"They don't get choice o' sides. The turret is set on a pivot. We turn those two guns wherever we damn' please. If you don't like our outfit, what'll you do about it?"

"Two guns ag'in a broadside—huh! Well, when you've seen as much of the show as I have," said Parr airily, "you won't mind askin' questions. But there's one word you can pass along. Them Rebs on the *Merrimac* said last night they'd lost their ram yesterday. I seen 'em prying around, and I reckon it's gospel. They had a five-foot iron wedge for a ram, and it's gone. Maybe that'll make you feel easier."

The word was passed along, with much scoffing. No one here cared about the *Merrimac* or her ram either. Parr grunted and pitched into his breakfast heartily, and cursed his torn and tallow-stiff pants.

The light mist over the Roads lifted and swirled away before a quickening breeze. Sunrise burgeoned in the east, the shores cleared. The three masts of the *Cumberland* were etched on the waters of the James. The hulk of the *Congress* still smoked from the shallows. The two frigates were anchored under the guns of Fort Monroe. All that part of the Roads flying the Union flag signaled disaster and dread suspense.

To the southward, the shore and waters were alive. Boats swarmed, Sewell's Point was massed with people. Behind the point, smoke wreathed the horizon and gathered weight; the *Merrimac* was firing up. The sun started his climb.

Six bells, seven o'clock, rang out from the *Minnesota*. Her officers and men crowded rails and rigging, watching Sewell's Point. Parr watched too, cursing the luck that had set him aboard here. He'd've had a swimming chance if he'd gone aboard the *Minnesota* but this ironclad coffin business was not to his notion. Drat that whiskey! The smoke from the low stacks of the *Monitor* blew into his eyes, blinded him, set him to coughing.

Excited voices reached him. The *Minnesota* was all a-welter, with drum-roll and pipe and shouted orders. She had called to quarters. Block and tackle squeaked and rattled as guns were run out. Parr's eyes cleared of smoke. A thrill took him—not of pleasure, either. There she was!

"Clear for action."

Parr jumped to duty. Now, for the first time, he was suddenly glad he was here. He thought of William Randall and his other lost mates—dead or alive, no telling. Then, through his grim eagerness, pierced astonishment at the workings of this queer vessel he was on.

The stacks disappeared; the smoke puffed from their gratings, driven by blowers. The blower pipes were stowed away, too. All hands down hatches to the berth deck; it was close and dusky here, with the hatch gratings for light and air. The craft was quivering upon the leash of pent steam; the steady roar of forced draught filled everything.

To stations! Up into the turret for the gun crews, or down through the top grating hatch; shot hoisters, cartridge passers, falling to work. Captain Worden mounted the short ladder to the pilot-house to con the ship.

In the turret, a space nine-by-twenty for guns and men. Parr was here, assigned to a gun crew. He eyed the iron walls grimly—eight inches of wrought iron plates. Plenty of light and air from the top grating, but no great store of elbow room. No way of looking out, either, except when the two ports had opened.

A hiss of steam, and Parr jumped a foot as the floor with its ammunition hatch rose slightly; the whole turret rose and turned, with prodigious clank and rumble. Parr's jaws clamped down on the quid he had obtained. If the contraption didn't work when it had to, good night!

He caught another rumble, more familiar. The *Merrimac* had opened fire on the *Minnesota*. And now, of a sudden, the frigate made answer with a roar that echoed in the turret and set the air gushing through the ventilators. Cables rasped through the hawse-holes; the *Monitor* trembled, her propeller whined as she gathered way. She was bearing out! Parr hitched at his trousers, looked for a place to spit, and found none. He was in for it now and no mistake.

The *Minnesota* was still firing. The rumbles from the *Merrimac*, the clangor of metal, sounded nearer. The turret turned a little more, swinging the guns dead ahead. The ports slid up, and the two guns slid their muzzles out into the sunlight. Parr could see nothing. Those muzzles almost filled the ports, giving view only for the lieutenant, stooping to train the guns. An order was shouted from the pilot box.

"Number one, fire!"

The turret reverberated, and the belch of smoke clouded the sunshine. The great Dahlgren thrust back in recoil and cleared the port, enveloping the lieutenant in wisps of muzzle smoke as he peered. A man called out eagerly.

"Did we hit her, sir?"

"Yes. We can't hurt her at this distance. We're going in for close quarters."

"She's hell for ramming, sir," blurted Parr. "Even without the iron ram—"

"Nothing for her to ram, my man," and the lieutenant laughed. "The deck has an overbeam of near four feet. Let

her ram and be damned, and we'll blow a hole through her!" The men cheered, and Parr felt wondrously heartened. The officer went on quickly. "She's heading for the *Minnesota* as though to run us down. We'll give it to her again; she's broadside on—"

The turret turned and paused. The guns spoke with twin explosions. Now came a mighty answering roar, a resounding hammer-blow on the turret that deafened the ears. A ranging shot.

"Close the ports!"

Just in time. A bellow of thunder, a shock of metal dinning on metal, and the *Monitor* rocked in her course. A full broadside, that. The ports opened again, the guns slid out; the two Dahlgrens roared and recoiled. They were at it now, hammer and tongs.

THE crews were smoke-grimed, sweat-streaked. Parr hauled on the tackles with the rest, choked by the smoke and fumes that filled the turret. The action was close, pointblank, savage. The air shuddered with the whanging blows of the *Merrimac's* guns. The *Monitor,* with the advantage of speed, was steaming around and around the other ship, planting her two steel fists like a boxer.

The turret turned, shielding the open ports while the guns were reloaded. It turned back, with the guns eager. Blind fighting, yes, but for one instant the black sides of the *Merrimac* shadowed the light. The hammer of shot upon her iron roof resounded above the roaring din. She was bound to ram—she did ram! The *Monitor* only heeled a little as the beak clashed and rasped along her overhang. The two Dahlgrens vomited their heavy balls at short pistol range, and the men in the turret cursed at the futility of it.

"Give us the wrought-iron balls, sir, and a thirty-pound charge instead o' fifteen, and we'll smash her open!"

"Can't exceed the ordnance manual for these guns," croaked the lieutenant. "A heavier charge might put us out of action."

"Who cares, if we sink her first, sir?"

No; orders were orders. Another ramming now. The two guns bore and bellowed; the hammering and clanging of metal was dizzily deafening. A yell went up—the *Merrimac* had grounded, wallowing like a stranded whale.

In came the *Monitor,* grazing her stern for a try at her rudder. Shots roared slap into her casements.

"That got to her!" yelled the lieutenant, and Parr cheered with the rest.

A man shrieked out, gushed blood, went staggering and falling. A shot? No. A bulge of the iron—a shot had hit outside as he leaned against it. Parr stared, and shifted his cud. The inside bulge was eight inches across. Gosh! Another in the same place—ugh!

The *Merrimac* was off the shoal and heading for the *Minnesota,* not to be balked of her victim. The *Monitor* swung about and made after. The air rocked to the greatest thunder yet, as the *Minnesota* loosed every gun that would bear. The *Monitor* slipped ahead, blocked the way; the *Merrimac* veered. Too late! She was grounded again.

Parr, sweating, dry of throat, kept an eye on the turret lining. He found himself counting the bulges. Shut in here, going it blind, you never knew what would happen. This iron coffin would go down like a stone, if one of those bulges opened up under another shot. And what an infernal racket! Iron upon iron, salvo and tattoo. Off shoals once more! Yells resounded hoarsely, thinly. She was turning tail—give her hell before she got away! After her! The two Dahlgrens vomited and roared.

No—she was veering around. By the warning cries, she was coming back, bent upon ramming again. Now she was pointblank. The open ports were dimmed

by her shadowing roof. With a clash and grind, the behemoth climbed over the freeboard, right abaft the turret. An explosion, a crash, frantic cries, came from somewhere forward.

The *Monitor* reeled, was whirled about. The men were sprawling everywhere. The turret engineer and the lieutenant were clawing up to their feet, close against the lining, when a resounding hammer-blow flung them across the deck in a heap, senseless. A new bulge in the metal. Parr, scrambling up, saw it, glimpsed the black mass right outside the port.

"One for the *Cumberland,* by God!" With the croaking yell, he flung himself at the gun-lanyard and perked it. He never heard the report, for another clanging blow shook the turret, but he was aware of the recoil.

The men were up, staring. The port was free of smoke, free of shadow. The *Monitor* had righted, but she was swinging wild, without a helm. What was the matter? Where was the *Merrimac?* A bedlam of voices broke loose. The two officers were given aid, the second in command dived below, at wild shouts from forward.

"For God's sake, orders! We're out of shot—load those guns—"

Lieutenant Green was struggling up. The *Monitor* straightened out. Parr, leaping to the open port, uttered a wild yell.

"She's licked! She's drawing off and she's down by the starn—hurray!"

The second in command came scrambling back. "A shell burst on the pilot house. Cap'n Worden is blinded and hurt, some damage done. I've put him on the sofa in his cabin. He's out; you're in command, sir—"

"Draw off to shoal water near the *Minnesota,*" ordered Green, "and hoist shot into the turret."

A dismayed chorus broke out. "You'll not go after her, sir?"

"We're ordered to defend the *Minnesota.* Yes, she's making off—has a bad list, too. That final shot was too much for her. All hands on deck for a swig of air!"

They tumbled up, by deck hatches and turret hatch. Somehow, Parr realized that it was over; his fighting exultation died out, as he filled his lungs with the fresh salty air. Smoke still lingered on the sun-dancing water, but it was clearing fast. Noon was close. The fight had lasted the morning through, he saw to his amazement.

The *Merrimac!* He cheered with the rest, as he saw her bearing up for the mouth of the Elizabeth, and down by the stern too, the flat deck forward of her roof black with men whose feet were awash. Parr shook his fist and yelled with cracked voice.

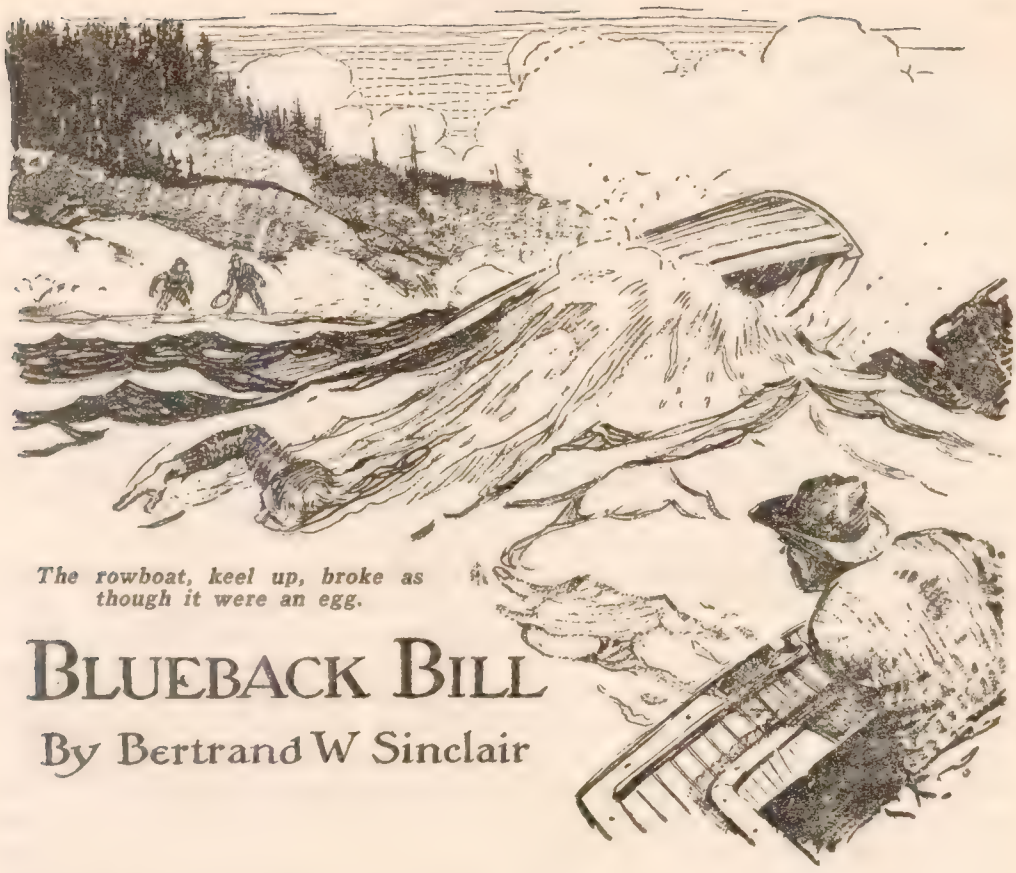
"Ahoy, you Rebs! How d'ye like this kind of a fight, hey?"

As though she heard him, the *Merrimac* labored to face about, then hesitated, and swung back to her course again. The men yelled afresh. The *Monitor* was churning for the *Minnesota* now, whose men rose up in a mass to cheer her, as they labored throwing over their heavy guns to lighten ship. Parr, staring, heard a voice at his dulled and ringing ears, felt a clap on the shoulder, saw Lieutenant Green there grinning at him.

"How do you like it yourself, aboard here? You did good work, my man. Say the word, and we'll have you transferred."

Parr stared, shook his head.

"I'd ruther be perched on the *Cumberland's* topmast, yonder, with hell and blazes all around, than cooped in an iron coffin with the Angel Gabriel pounding at her! Thanks, sir. But all I want now is to get my clean Sunday pants and join up with a blue water ship. Only come to think of it, I reckon them pants are clean lost now, durn it!"



The rowboat, keel up, broke as though it were an egg.

BLUEBACK BILL

By Bertrand W Sinclair

THE *Iron Duke* and the *Shamrock,* lashed side by side, slid through smooth water under the bold cliffs of Texada Island, steering into the fiery eye of a setting sun.

On this opening day of the blueback season they had come that morning on a school of salmon breaking water like trout in Maytime. Hungry fish, feeding on the surface.

There are tricks in every trade. Perry Connor and the Duke of Belize knew those salmon were feeding on young shrimp. So they ran out light lines, bronze and silver spinners baited with a bit of red meat on white skin cut from the throat of the first salmon they caught. Fly-fishing, they call that in the trolling fleet, because the spoons work almost on the surface.

The fishboxes of the *Shamrock* and the *Iron Duke* were full. They had made a killing on the opening day. And they had just stumbled on that school at sunrise, coming out from anchorage, headed north to the big spring salmon grounds.

"This is too good to pass up," Perry said. "We better stick around while this run is on."

"Yeah. Salmon is where you find 'em," the Duke agreed. He and Perry generally agreed about things. They had begun their acquaintance by a glorious brawl, and ended up as side-kickers. Perry was big, and red-headed, young and lusty and noisy. The Duke of Belize was a little man of forty, with pale blue eyes and a sort of sad but friendly look. Nobody ever guessed that he had been next thing to lightweight champion of the world once, and that his spirit was still young and his heart big, even if t' old hinges were getting more than a little

rusty. Stout fellows, each in his own way.

They were bound for a fish-buyers' floating camp in Blubber Bay. But when they turned Coho Point a bulky packer lay at anchor in a kelp patch, and trollers with cocked-up poles were selling him their catch. A rowboat fleet that camped ashore by the Point shuttled back and forth.

"That's a Winch collector," Perry said. "We could sell to him an' shoot back to Gillis Bay tonight. Save runnin' three miles an' back to Blubber Bay."

They eased up to the packer. On the first day the take is generally good. The packer's deck was strewn with fish, which his helper was forking into an iced hold. Perry and the Duke heaved up their fish. They were small salmon, but there were a lot of them.

Perry saw a white Linton rowboat slide under his stern as the buyer handed him his money. He watched that rowboat troller get a picaroon and fork fish up on the packer's deck. He was a slight youngster in black overalls, a faded blue sweater. His bare head showed bright yellow. A nice looking blond boy about twenty, with a curiously impassive, mask-like face.

He unloaded sixty-odd bluebacks, which is a big take for a rowboat fisherman, with his one line against a gasboat's six or seven.

The fish went on the scale a hundred pounds or so at a time in a tin box. On the last batch the buyer called:

"Ninety-six pounds."

"A hundred and six," the boy said.

"Huh? I said ninety-six."

"Don't pull that short stuff, Murphy," the kid snapped. "I can read a scale."

"Ninety-six pounds goes," the packer snarled.

He was thick shouldered. Also he had two days growth of black stubble on his heavy jaw, fish-scales on his boots and a scowl on his face.

"Take it or leave it!" he growled.

BOP! Bump. There were two blows struck. The rowboat kid hit the packer and the packer hit the deck.

There was no fluke about that knockdown, no waste motion. Perry Connor and the Duke of Belize, both handy men with their hands, grunted in admiration of the speed and deftness with which the kid landed that punch.

The man's eyes had a dazed look when he raised himself to a sitting posture. It took effort. He was practically out from that one right cross to the jaw.

"It's a hundred and six pounds, Murphy," the yellow-haired boy said in a low tone. "Come across."

The buyer came across. The kid got down into his rowboat. He was slim-waisted and narrow-hipped, but his shoulders were wide and flat inside the worn blue sweater.

"Boy's a scrapper," the Duke said. "Handles himself like he'd rubbed his shoes in the resin. Got a kick in that right mitt."

The Duke laughed as they eased away.

"I'll bet Murphy is still wondering how a bald-faced kid could knock him kicking like that," Perry said. "He used to buy for the Three Crown. I've heard of him trimming the boys on weight. Bet he don't ever try to short weight that baby again. That blond kid can take care of himself. Wonder who he is. Funny, Duke, but he has a familiar look to me. Yet I can't place him."

"Funny," the Duke of Belize answered. "I have the same impression about him."

"I know," the Duke burst out over a cup of cocoa, when they got anchored for the night in Gillis Bay. "We seen that kid fight a semi-final last winter at the Crystal Palace in Seattle, time we made that trip down there. Recollect? He cleaned up a Filipino lightweight from Los Angeles."

"Oh, sure," Perry nodded. "I knew I'd

seen that baby face somewhere. Now he's rowboat trollin'. Kinda funny for a box-fighter that rated a spot next to the main event."

Between power trollers and rowboat men there is a standing feud. The gasboat troller is the man on horseback, and the man on horseback has always looked with irritating condescension on the lowly who go afoot. Many a gasboat troller got his start in a rowboat, working kelp points and shoal water, and he remembers with profound distaste his oar-blistered hands, long hours in cold rain, the days when wind kept him in his lean-to camp on the beach, while the gasboats with power and sea-legs marched the rolling sea and took fish. A gasboat could jump a hundred miles overnight to a better fishing ground. The rowboat had to stay put, or beg a tow. The rowboat men are the slum-dwellers of the Gulf of Georgia, and the gasboat men are the aristocrats.

So the two don't mix much. A rowboat cannot go offshore to troll, and the gasboat man who shortens his deep lines and moves in on points and kelp-beds where the rowboats work is apt to get his lines cut if he gets foul of the rod and line artists. They are not a tame bunch.

So all the Duke and Perry saw of the Coho Point trollers was when either of them rolled up to Coho or into Blubber Bay to sell their catch.

They had Gillis Bay to themselves for a time, and phenomenally good trolling. There wasn't always a packer at Coho Point. Often at night the camp-fires of the rowboat men lifted a row of reddish points when they passed in the dark. The tents and lean-tos of split cedar made a little village.

Perry kept wondering now and then about that fair-haired boy with the girlish face and the deadly wallop.

For six days Perry and the Duke made Gillis Bay their headquarters and made big money. On the seventh morning a strong westerly wind blew up in the forenoon. Perry and the Duke had northern trollers, beamy, deep-draft, able boats. They could fish in almost any kind of Gulf weather if the salmon would bite.

And the Duke of Belize, in this short choppy sea, got careless on a deck wet with spray. He stepped on a slippery spot just as the *Iron Duke* did a violent roll. The Duke fell across a hatch coaming and snapped his left leg just below the knee.

A COMPOUND fracture of the leg-bone hurts, but the Duke could take it plenty. He crawled into his wheel-house, hoisted himself painfully on a stool and steered the *Iron Duke* for Gillis Bay. He had to get her in himself. Nobody could come alongside to board him in that slop. He didn't need to hoist distress signals. When the Duke started into the Bay with all his gear dragging Perry Connor followed, knowing there was something wrong. They came alongside each other in the shelter of the Bay. The little man could handle his controls, and that was all.

Perry got aboard, stowed the Duke's gear. Then he put the Duke on a mattress on the floor, put the *Shamrock* on a line a hundred feet astern, and started with her in tow.

It was dirty going, driving at seven knots into the teeth of that westerly, but there wasn't any choice. Once in Blubber Bay, Perry anchored the *Shamrock* and laid the Iron Duke alongside the fish scow. He had to get rid of the Duke's morning catch, and he wanted somebody to go with him across to Powell River. The belching smokestacks of that paper-mill town waved black pennants seven miles across Malaspina Strait—seven miles of beam sea, white-capped now under the wicked lash of that westerly.

The first face that looked down on Perry from the scow was the face of the Blueback Kid. That, Perry had learned, was what they called him. His right name was Bill Tollman. His family had a stump ranch back of Van Anda, a few miles up the east coast of Texada.

The trollers around Blubber Bay had told Perry the Blueback Kid was bad medicine. He fought anyone, regardless of size, who looked crosswise at him. The rowboat trollers hated him, the fish buyer said, because the kid could catch as many salmon with rod and line as any two rowboat men on Coho Point.

He had had a fuss with some of the rowboat trollers a couple of days earlier. They had ganged up on him, and he had clawed a couple of them pretty badly with his herring rake, which is a thin-bladed piece of wood about ten feet long, with one edge studded with a row of small sharp steel teeth, to snick herring out of the water for bait. It is a nasty weapon. The fish buyer expected the Provincial police might get after the kid for that. But they were a lousy bunch, he said, and they had ganged up on the kid. So what the hell! The Kid was a going hound, and the rest of them were just jealous.

The Blueback Kid, gazing impassively down on the *Iron Duke,* didn't look like any terror to snakes. He didn't even look grown-up, if you discounted that pair of shoulders. His face was oval and fine-featured. Nobody would have picked him for a fighter. Still, he had dropped that cheating fish-buyer as if he had used a falling axe.

Perry looked up at the Kid. No, he wasn't mistaken. Same lad who took the Filipino at the Crystal Palace.

"Say, kid, my partner has broke his leg. I got to get him across to the hospital," Perry said. "I might need help. Care to go along to Powell River?"

The kid simply nodded, stepped down on the *Iron Duke's* deck.

Every now and then as they rolled in those short, steep seas the Blueback Kid would cough. The Duke lay on his mattress spread on the floor, right over the keelson, and gritted his teeth when the violent motion shifted him. The kid sat on the companion steps, barking occasionally, as if he had a cold.

"You'd ought to quit smokin' cigarettes," Perry said, kidding. "You ain't long for this world with a cough like that."

"I don't smoke," the Kid said quietly.

"What did you quit fightin' for an' go rowboatin' fishin'?" Perry's curiosity got the better of him at last.

Bill Tollman looked at Perry with a startled expression.

"Me'n the Duke saw you box in Seattle last winter once," Perry explained. "It was you, wasn't it? Or have you got a double?"

"It was me," the Kid admitted.

"You were good," Perry said.

"Yeah, good enough to be a ham-and-egger," the Kid said in a flat tone.

After a little he spoke again: "Say, don't advertise me around Texada, will you? Nobody around here knows I ever fought in the ring. My folks live on the Island. They wouldn't like it, 'specially my mother. I don't care a lot, myself, about bein' a pug. I needed the money."

"Okay," Perry told him. "I won't tip your hand. Still, if you could fight main events you'd pull down important jack."

"I'll never fight main events," the Blueback Kid murmured. "I'll probably never fight again."

"Accordin' to local chatter," Perry grinned. "You don't do nothin' else but."

"That's different," young Tollman muttered.

"Well," Perry continued to make conversation, "if you're goin' to follow salmon trollin', you'd ought to get you a gasboat. If you keep clickin' the way you do with a rowboat, an' save your

jack, you could soon get yourself somethin' with power, so you could drift around an' get in on some real salmon fishin'. I started in a rowboat, myself."

"Yeah," the Blueback Kid said. "I'd sure like to have a powerboat to troll salmon. I might get one, if I live long enough."

But he didn't explain that, and while Perry wondered, he didn't like to ask.

GRAY-FACED with pain, the Duke of Belize came at last via boat and ambulance to the company hospital at Powell River. Perry hung around while the leg fracture was reduced. The doctor said the little man wouldn't walk a deck for two months.

"Gee, I hate to think of the *Iron Duke* swinging at anchor empty an' dark," the Duke sighed. "Put her where she'll be safe, Perry. Fish her yourself, if you like, an' lay up the *Shamrock*."

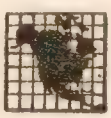
And that was that. Perry had lost his partner. The Duke of Belize would lose the cream of the salmon run. And Perry had two boats on his hands.

The westerly was dying out when he ran back to Blubber Bay. The Blueback Kid got in his rowboat and went bobbing out in the swell. The fish, he said, would bite now.

Perry sat brooding awhile. Then he went ashore and looked over the ground. An abandoned troller at anchor was a temptation to shiftless kelp-hounds who needed gear. Perry found a proper spot on the beach, below the great grinding, clanking lime plant, and a boat-repair man who had a little shop.

They beached the *Iron Duke* on a high tide, jacked her up, shored her bilges, and took all the Duke's loose gear and personal effects and stored them in the boat man's shed.

Then Perry was free to fish. He wouldn't go north now, for awhile. He would have to stick around and fish bluebacks until the Duke was on the mend. He didn't have to, but he wanted to. The Duke of Belize was a grand little guy.



THE Gulf of Georgia, which lies between the mainland of British Columbia and the vast length of Vancouver Island, is an inland sea forty miles wide and a hundred miles long. A place of fluky weather—sudden squalls off a mountainous coast, strong tidal currents setting by island groups. Recurring summer westerlies plague the Gulf trollers, neither built nor powered for heavy weather, as the *Shamrock* and the *Iron Duke* were. Perry had to fish hard to make anything like the sums he would have earned up around the Queen Charlottes, in Hecate Strait and off North Island. Not so good.

The bluebacks vanished from Gillis Bay. Perry based himself on Blubber Bay and trolled Coho Point, Rebecca and Harwood Islands. Sometimes he would march back and forth just outside where the rowboat men worked off Coho Point.

He often snickered to himself when he heard about this squabble and that. There was room for everybody. No individual troller or class owned the Gulf waters. But some of the rowboat men seemed to think they had special rights to certain spots. This attitude was what produced collisions.

A couple of days later the Blueback Kid came in with seventy blueback, double what some of the gasboats had. The Kid rowed into Blubber bay every evening with his fish. He had fought and whipped both the packers that collected at the Point. He had that day (Perry heard before the Kid came in) tangled with a gasboat man and slapped him over the head with an oar. The fellow was sitting on the scow, snarling about that when Bill Tollman forked up his catch.

And when the Kid climbed up to get his money the troller went for him.

Systematically, deftly, without a change of expression, the Blueback Kid met his rush, side-stepped, chopped him with left jabs, right crosses, hooks. He finished by setting that angy fisherman down on his haunches, his face smeared with blood.

A rowboat troller, standing by, said to the Blueback Kid: "Some of these days somebody'll take a fish knife an' split you wide open."

For a few seconds the Kid didn't say anything. A fit of coughing shook him. He walked to the side of the scow and spat in the sea. He turned and walked toward the man, his head drawing down between his shoulders, and his fists clenched.

Perry Connor was right by his elbow. He caught the Kid's arm and said sharply: "Forget it. Let 'em rave."

The Kid's set face, Perry thought afterward, must have masked a volcanic anger. Perry's peace-making impulse had been kindly, sympathetic. There was something about that slim, blond boy. But Perry had a grip like a bear's clutch, and it isn't always wise to lay hold of a man who has just finished one fight and is headed for another.

The Kid sank his left fist in Perry's wind. It was like being kicked by a mule. Perry let go and his hands automatically came up, but not fast enough to stop a spear-like jab that snapped his head back. Perry was a fighting man himself. He thought: "The damn kid must be crazy," and didn't want to hurt him. So he blocked, without hitting back. He outweighed the Blueback Kid forty pounds and had it over him four inches in reach.

Perry was too shifty for the Blueback Kid to nail with any more of those rapier thrusts. They gave a nice boxing exhibition for a few seconds, and drew apart.

Perry dropped his hands.

"Hell!" he said disgustedly. "You're a fightin' fool. But I don't see anything to fight about, and I don't fight for fun. Go work on the guy you started for, if you got to fight."

But the guy the Kid had started for had taken to his boat and rowed away. The Blueback Kid looked at Perry for a second or two.

He didn't say anything, but his face had a queer twist. He stepped down into his rowboat and went away with slow, steady strokes. Perry heard that rasping cough once or twice.

"Just like a damn rattlesnake," someone said spitefully. "All coiled up ready to strike. Some of these days somebody's goin' to kill that baby."

THAT end of Texada was alive with blueback salmon. Perry did very well for a week. He stayed out and took them whether the west wind blew or not. Perry began to understand how the other rowboat men felt about the Blueback Kid and his uncanny flair for topping their catches all the time. Perry topped all the gasboats. Some of them were envious and couldn't keep from growling. But Perry Connor didn't give a damn what they thought. He went right on catching bluebacks.

At the end of a week he ran across to Powell River to see how the Duke was faring. He found the little man propped up with pillows, sipping egg-nog. The Duke didn't have much to say. He looked okay. Lots of color in his cheeks —too much almost. But there was something wrong. Perry felt it. They had been eating out of the same pot too long for him not to know that something sat heavy on the Duke's mind.

"Spit it out," he said finally. "What's eating on you?"

"They tell me I got T.B."

"Wha-at?" Perry exclaimed.

"Oh, it ain't no death sentence," the

Duke of Belize hurried to explain. "But I got a touch. A spot in my right lung. I gotta get back off the coast as soon as I can walk. For a year, maybe. They say a high, dry climate 'll kill the bugs. Then I can come back."

"Gee whiz!" Perry grumbled. "That's tough. How come? You're tough as whalebone."

"I dunno. That's the verdict. I was coughin'. I been barkin' all spring, with colds. The doc give me blood tests an' shots in the arm—the works. It could be worse, Perry. It can be nipped in the bud. I can take to the hills an' loaf. I got a pretty fair stake in the bank."

"Yeah, that's somethin'," Perry nodded. "Darn it, I'm goin' to miss you, you old gorilla. I won't have anybody to argue with. What you goin' to do with the *Iron Duke?* Lay her up in Vancouver?"

"Why, I thought you'd fish the old hooker yourself, maybe," the Duke said. "If you got a chance you could sell the *Shamrock,* this early in the season. You were talkin' about buildin' a new boat this winter, if you were staky this fall. You better beat it north. No use you hangin' around here with me, an' miss all the good spring salmon trollin'. If you fish the *Iron Duke,* I'll know she's in good hands. She'll be in good shape when I come back."

Perry said he would decide about that. The *Shamrock* was good, but the *Iron Duke* was better. She was just about the last word in a troller. The Duke had put a lot of thought and money into that little ship. She was his one love. That was why the Duke of Belize wanted Perry to use her. He didn't like to think of her lying dark and still at a berth, full of emptiness and musty smells for a year. Perry knew how the Duke felt.

A doctor came in, smiled professionally, looked over the Duke's chart. Perry followed him out into the hall.

"No mistake about the Duke's lung?" he asked.

"No, but it's hardly more than incipient," the sawbones nodded. "Nothing to be alarmed about. Still, you can't trifle with those bacilli. High altitude and sunshine will clear that up. He's going to be all right."

"Tough on the little guy, just the same," Perry remarked.

"It would be tougher, my young friend, if the little guy had reached the hemorrhage stage, or if he had a debilitated body and no money," the doctor said grimly. "A few months in the mountains, decent food, not flapjacks and canned beans—it's a wonder you fishermen don't die of indigestion, the way you feed yourselves—will clear up that lung condition."

"Thanks, doc," Perry said. "I guess it could be worse. But a broken leg an' T.B. is plenty, seems to me."

THREE days of clear calm weather broke in a furious westerly that afternoon. Perry was working between Rebecca Islet and Coho Point. And when the seas began to break white, the fleet ran for cover.

But Perry didn't choose to run. Blubacks often took the spoon blithely toward evening in a slop. Often they would bite until dark, when it was so rough a man could hardly handle his gear.

Perry trolled off the kelp points outside Coho. The rowboat men were all ashore. They couldn't work either. Presently Perry had it all to himself, except for three gasboats coming from the east, running with poles up, for Blubber Bay. They were light and narrow-gutted and they jumped like fleas as they passed the *Shamrock.*

Perry had seen Gulf trollers put their pole-tips in the water and wondered how those fellows didn't get pitched over-

board. He didn't scorn those lighter craft for running, although he knew they said he was a fish-hog, a reckless fool who stayed out and fished and courted disaster. Perry could grin at that. North, he fished offshore, in the open Pacific, which often had the Gulf backed off the boards for heavy going.

Right off Coho Point one of those scudding trollers suddenly stopped chugging and fell off into the trough. Perry was looking back. He swung about and began snapping in his gear. The wind set straight inshore, blowing hard. A lee shore, studded with hungry boulders. That disabled troller was making leeway fast. His two companions had turned back. Unless he got his engine started or somebody got a line on him quick, that troller was due for a smash.

He didn't get his engine going and nobody put a line on him. By the time Perry got there it was just about too late. The thirty-foot troller was drifting sidewise for the boulder beach and his fellows didn't dare come close enough to shoot him a line. Perry himself didn't dare getting too near that shore in a seaway, although he had plenty of power. He drew too much water to risk shallows and boulders awash.

"Damn shame," Perry muttered. "I guess another troller's out of luck. He'll lose his boat, an' maybe himself, too, if a sea slams him against a rock when he has to swim for it."

And then a notion popped up in Perry's fertile brain.

He moved in as close as he dared and headed the *Shamrock* nose up into wind and sea. He had a hundred-fathom coil of half-inch line, a thirty-inch cork ring buoy. He clove-hitched that line on the buoy and heaved it overboard, let it run. Then he jumped back to his wheel and controls. He had to maneuver, and keep out in deep water. If the drive of the wind and the run of the waves would carry that buoy down on the troller before she struck, Perry could tow her off with that line.

A knot of rowboat men stood on shore. They had a seat in the grandstand. They only had to walk down from their camps. They could do nothing for that disabled boat. A rowboat would be hard put to keep from swamping. The tide was running, making a nasty rip.

Perry swore. The tide was carrying the buoy faster than the wind. It couldn't drift into that laboring troller. The fellow had his anchor out and the full scope of line, but it didn't hold him. He dragged every time a sea lifted his hull.

And then Perry saw a husky white rowboat shove off through the surf, under the push of several pairs of hands. But there was only one pair of hands to man the oars. Only one man in that rowboat fleet with the guts to take such a chance.

That one was the Blueback Kid, stripped to a pair of shorts and his old blue sweater, rowing like mad.

He came down on the buoy, grabbed, hauled it inboard, bent to his oars again, heading for that disabled troller, who was now within measurable feet of a patch of shark-toothed rocks on which the sea broke in a white smother.

Perry heard the crunching smack of the Kid's rowboat against that rolling power vessel, as he heaved up the ring buoy. But the fellow grabbed the line, clawed to his forward deck and made fast to his bitts.

He threw a hand up in frantic signal to slack the troller's hull bumped. Perry shoved his clutch in. As he took up the slack the troller's hull bumped. Perry heard the jar. It knocked the troller's stovepipe off his deck-iron.

It was close, but close doesn't count at sea, where a miss is as good as several miles. The *Shamrock* plunged. The line held, bar-tight. Slowly at first, giving her a little more speed as he got headway on that wallowing hulk, Perry towed the troller out of danger.

BUT the Blueback Kid didn't get out of danger. Perry watched him as well as his tow. A sixteen-foot Linton rowboat in competent hands can drown plenty of alleged cruisers. But the Kid's hands, Perry supposed, were tired from that struggle, and he must have shipped a lot of water while he got that line aboard. He couldn't seem to claw away from those boulders. The wind struck him in a heavier blast. He lifted on a sea. The next one lifted high and sharp and he fell off broadside-to under it, and for a few seconds Perry saw nothing at all.

Then the white rowboat, keel up, rose on a wave, to be run in and smacked down with a rending of wood on a cluster of pinnacle rocks. It broke as if it were an egg.

Perry blinked. He stared. After a little he saw a yellow head glint, a white arm flash in the overhand stroke. The Kid was swimming. He didn't have far to go.

Perry saw him dodge in among those rocks, standing out between waves like some snaggy giant's teeth. A couple of men ran down to the water's edge. They picked the Blueback Kid up and set him on his feet. He stood between them for a few seconds, his head hanging down. He seemed to sway on his feet.

Then he straightened up, shook off the hands supporting him and walked up the bank.

For a mile the crippled boat wallowed on the end of the towline. Then her engine fired. Under power she took a little strain off the line. But Perry didn't cast loose. He could see a steady stream of water discharging from her side. She had taken at least one jarring bump. The fisherman never stopped pumping until Perry slowed down in the quiet stretch of Blubber Bay. Then he came alongside.

"Thanks a heap," he said. "I gotta beach her right away. Leakin' like a sieve. Knocked some caulkin' out of a seam, I guess."

"Don't thank me," Perry said. "I couldn't 'a' got that line on you myself. Thank the Blueback Kid."

"Yeah, I guess that's right," the troller admitted.

"He smashed up his rowboat," Perry continued. "The wind an' sea put him on the rocks."

"Oh? Too bad."

"It'll be too bad for you if you let it go with just words," Perry thought to himself. "Rowboats cost money."

He unloaded his fish, anchored, went ashore. He stopped a moment to run his hand along the *Iron Duke*, as a rider might pat a favorite horse. By heck, he *would* fish the old *Iron Duke*. It would please the little man while he fought the bugs off there in the high places to know that his ship was plowing the green furrows up north, with Perry's hand on her wheel.

Perry walked by the clanking lime plant and its cluster of company houses, along a road. A path branching off that road over a neck of land led him down to the beach by Coho Point.

Bill Tollman, otherwise the Blueback Kid, was a little on Perry's mind. That kid had guts. He had forgotten the old feud between gasboats and rowboat men, to help a man in peril. Perry had known rowboat trollers to watch a gasboat wrecked and say callously: "Well that's one less of them to get in our hair. Them gasboat trollers think they own the Gulf."

The Blueback Kid was sitting on a beach log in front of his shelter, a mere hovel of split cedar shakes. His shorts and sweater hung on a stick by a campfire.

On a narrow strip of gravel above the tide, the remains of the Kid's sixteen-foot Linton boat had been hauled up. It was a broken framework, utterly be-

yond repair. The Kid sat staring at that. He didn't hear Perry until he was at his elbow.

"Get bumped at all makin' shore?" Perry asked. There was a raw bruise on the Kid's cheek-bone.

"What the hell's it to you?"

The sulky passion in his voice amazed Perry.

"Well—"

The Blueback Kid coughed once or twice. He seemed to catch his breath.

"Scram," he said curtly.

"Lissen here, old kid," Perry began. With a highly explosive temper himself, Perry was apt to get impatient with other men who went off at half-cock.

The Blueback Kid was on his feet, coming at Perry before he finished the sentence. His left fist was out and carried high, his right cocked at his waist. There was no mistaking his fury or intent. There was something almost desperate about that boy, something that made Perry Connor suddenly and swiftly sorry for him. There had to be some basis for that blind rage.

But he had to keep that bearcat's claws out of his hide.

Perry did it by weathering a flurry of short, spearing punches and rushing into a clinch. He didn't block them all. The Blueback Kid's knuckles split his lower lip and put a mouse under one eye.

But Perry Connor had weight and tremendous strength. He tied the Blueback Kid up and the Kid couldn't break loose. Perry didn't want to sock him and he didn't want to be socked the way the Blueback Kid could sock.

Bill Tollman struggled to get out of that bear-like clutch.

"Quit it, quit it, Kid," Perry pleaded. "I just want to talk to you, you damn fool! Lay off this war stuff."

Perry got a half-Nelson on the Kid's neck to cool him off. He lay on top of the Kid for a minute, holding that grip.

"Don't be a goop," he said. "I don't want to scrap with you. No sense in us scrappin'. What ails you, that you want to tear everybody to pieces?"

The Kid lay silent for a long time, his face in the dirt.

"All right," he said finally. "You win I quit."

PERRY let go. The Kid rolled over on his side. He began to cough, a hard, sharp bark. He spat, and the sputum was streaked with blood.

"Didja bust somethin' inside you?" Perry breathed.

The Kid shook his head. He sat up, wiping his lips. His face had gone wooden again.

"Sorry," he said at last. "I went kinda haywire, I guess. I seem to get all the wrong breaks. An' it makes me sort of —well, red-eyed, sometimes."

"I'll say," Perry agreed.

He looked at the bright spot over each cheekbone, that fine-drawn look on the Kid's face. There was something there that didn't go with his wide, flat shoulders, the smooth, flowing muscles of his bare arms. That blood-stained sputum tied in with the Duke of Belize's plight.

"Say, Kid," he asked, "have you, by any chance, got a touch of T.B.?"

The Blueback Kid turned his impassive face to Perry.

"Good guesser," he said. "Funny a stranger would take a tumble, when nobody else, not even my own folks, guesses."

"How long since you got wise?" Perry asked.

"Oh, right off the bat," the Blueback Kid told him. "I was trainin' for a go in Portland last winter when I got the flu pretty bad. After I got over that I kept on barkin'. I went through a couple of matches, an' it didn't stop. So I went to a lung specialist. The bugs had got a hold."

"What did they tell you to do?"

"Get out of the damp coast climate,"

the Kid said. "Go up into the mountains, where it's hot and dry."

"Well, what the hell are you stickin' around here for?" Perry demanded. "That's layin' odds against yourself."

"A man can't live in the hills on hot air," the boy said. "I'm all right here in the summer weather. Only way I can get a stake is to fish for it. Can't fight any more. I was doin' all right trollin', but things always break wrong for me. I had over seventy bucks the first week. Now I've lost my boat. I'll be broke again when I pay for a new one. An' then somethin' else'll happen."

He stared out over the sea.

"Things kinda get you down," Perry said. "Is that why you jump right in a man's face if he bats an eye at you?"

"Maybe," the Kid admitted. "I'm on the spot. I can't get it outa my mind. There's a lot of bozos around here that seem to think if a guy fishes hard an' tops 'em they have to get a down on him. I can't go around tellin' everybody I'm sick. That I got a old man so crippled with rheumatism he hasn't walked for two years. Nor that there's seven of us in the family, an' the oldest next to me is a girl thirteen. That they all got to eat, an' there's nobody but me to bring in a little money."

Perry muttered something. Perhaps something in his attitude loosened up the Blueback Kid, whose pent-up feelings for a long time had found no release save in savage retaliation upon whosoever troubled him. He went on talking in that flat, strained tone.

"I've been plugging at that for three years. I did all right in the ring, but they don't know that. My mother thinks I had a good job in Vancouver. Nobody but you around here ever saw me with the gloves on, I guess. My mother would as soon I was dead. To her fightin' an' swearin' an' drinkin' are straight roads to hell. She's religious, an' she's had a tough time. She'd worry herself sick if she knew I had T.B. She don't think much of fishin' or fishermen. She thinks it's a sinful, rowdy life. But she an' the kids an' the old man have to eat. An' that's up to me."

"It's up to you to get into a country where you have a chance to get those bugs outa your system, too," Perry observed. "Or there won't be anybody bringin' the Tollman family bacon for their breakfasts."

"Yeah—well, if I can keep jinxes off my tail," the Kid said, "I might come out this fall with two or three hundred clear. But there's times I get kinda low, an' I wonder what'll happen next, an' I'm ready to tear everything to pieces. Bein' in the water an' gettin' bumped on those rocks an' losin' my boat had me kinda stirred up when you came along just now. I guess that's why I flew at you. No hard feelin's."

"Hell, no!" Perry shook his head. "You could 'a' let that gasboat man shift for himself. Rowboat men an' gasboat men don't generally love each other much. None of these other guys took a chance."

"If I could get rid of this spot in my lung an' work up to gasboat trollin' I'd be sittin' pretty," the Blueback Kid said. "This jealousy business is the weeds. You were doin' your damndest to help the guy. I just figured I could put that line aboard him. You gotta give any guy a hand when he's in a tight place."

"Yeah," Perry nodded. "If you expect ever to get a hand when you're in a jam yourself. "Well, I just walked over to see if you made it all right. I'll be seein' you."

PERRY strode along the trail to Blubber Bay. The west wind whistled in the tall fir and branchy cedars. The plumy tops bent in that gale. The seas snored on the cliffy beach. The Gulf was all

spots of white on jade green in the sunlight. But Perry Connor wasn't thinking of that.

"You gotta give a guy a hand when he's in a tight place," he muttered. "That ought to go both ways."

The troller he had towed in had his boat on the beach. He sat waiting for the tide to fall, to enable him to make repairs. Perry stopped and told him about the Blueback Kid's rowboat.

"Well, I got to square that," the troller said promptly. "I would've lost my packet only for you. I ain't very staky, but I'll replace his rowboat."

"Okay," Perry nodded. "But there's somethin' else."

He continued to talk. The fisherman sat on a rock, listening, nodding.

"Sure," he said. "I'm all for it. That kid deserves a break. Takes guts to buck that sort of thing. You got to hand it to that Tollman kid. He ain't hardly begun to grow hair on his chin yet, but he'll tackle anything or anybody. What he told you about his family is right, all right. I know 'em. Let's go see the boys about this."

Near sunset the west wind died a sudden death. The Gulf rolled in smooth undulations, flattening out. Perry steamed out of Blubber Bay, stood down to Coho Point, and anchored a little offshore. He put over his dinghy and rowed in.

The Blueback Kid sat right where he had left him, his hands clasped over his knees. He said "Hello" to Perry, but he didn't have anything else to say.

Perry Connor took a roll of currency out of his pocket.

"Gasboat trollers," said Perry diffidently, "are part human, same as other men. The guy you took the line aboard figured he owed you a new rowboat. So he give me sixty-five bucks for you, which is what them sixteen-foot Lintons sell for. An' the rest of the boys—well, maybe I talked kinda free about the breaks you were gettin'. So they dug down in their jeans to give you a leg up. Some put in five, some ten dollars. Here's a list of the names. Sometime when you get on your feet you can pay it back. It's a loan, see? There's three hundred an' fifty bucks altogether."

He put it in the Blueback Kid's hands.

"Another thing," Perry went on hurriedly. "I got two boats on my hands. My partner—that little guy we took to Powell River with a broken leg—he's in the same spot you are. Got a touch of T.B. So as soon as his leg knits he's off to the mauntains. I'm goin' to fish his boat, the *Iron Duke*. I'm goin' north where the big money is, an' I'd kinda like to have somebody along workin' the *Shamrock*, instead of layin' her up. It's a business proposition, see? You take over the *Shamrock* on a share lay—one-third for the boat an' two-thirds for you. If you're as swift with gasboat gear as you are with a rod an' line on bluebacks you might clean up four five hundred bucks for yourself by the end of September, an' then you could hike for the high country. What say?"

"*That* boat?"

The Blueback Kid sat on his haunches, holding that money in his hand. He wasn't looking at the money. He stared at Perry's ship, smiling and crying at the same time. Tears that glistened in the sunset oozed out his eyes and ran down his smooth, tanned cheeks.

He didn't look like a twenty-minute egg who fought everybody, anywhere, anytime, nor like a man stricken with tuberculosis and desperate over it.

He looked, indeed, with his blue eyes, blond hair and girlish face, rather like a small boy who had just been rapped over the knuckles.

But Perry Connor, fumbling with a couple of pebbles, knew better than that.

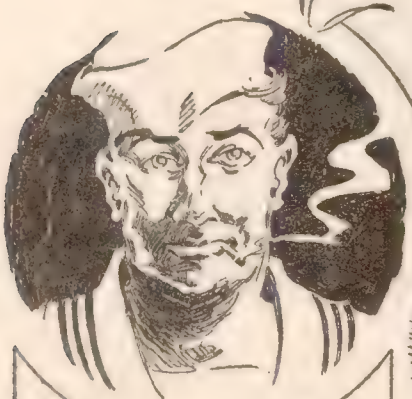
Perry could remember a time or two when he, himself, hard-boiled as he was, had cried for sheer happiness.

TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS

• SPLICE THE MAIN BRACE •

Because in old sea-fights running-rigging was a favorite target, and braces were often shot away, one of the first duties after a battle was to repair (or splice) the main-brace. This job done, it was the custom to serve out a double portion of grog. Today the term is a sailorman's invitation to "have a drink."



• COLLAR BRAIDS •

The three stripes of braid on an American gob's collar actually commemorate three big British naval victories, viz: Battle of the Baltic, Battle of the Nile, and Trafalgar.

• CAPTAIN

Contrary to general belief, there is no such rank as Captain in the Merchant Service. The legal title is *Master Mariner*.

• FEELING BLUE •

A phrase from clippers in the China Trade. When they lost a master or officers on the voyage they would come into Boston Town flying BLUE flags at fore, main and mizzen, and with a broad BLUE stripe painted around the ship's sides.

They bleated and scattered like sheep.

NO QUARTER

By Maurice Walsh

Third part of five

IT WAS the second day after the sack of Aberdeen, and our Highland men and Irishers were angry and grimly vengeful. Our Captain General, the Marquis of Montrose, had told us to do with Aberdeen what we willed, and it was no safe place for a Covenanter that day.

I went down there with my foster brother, Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh, and we had the streets to ourselves until we came upon the kirk and the public stocks—and a young woman, ankle-locked there outside the arched door. Margaret Anderson, her name was, and one Andrew Cant, the minister, was punishing her for not coming to hear his sermons—nor listening to his courtship.

We were a little tipsy, both of us, but not too much to know how to handle that sort of thing. We took Andrew Cant's fine coat and locked his bare shanks in stocks, and Margaret Anderson came away with us to camp, for there would be no safety for her in a Covenant city, once our army had gone.

It took us ten months to fight through to Maviston of Lochloy, where Margaret had kin. And by that time she had made a place for herself in the regiment and was like to remain.

It was about that time that we became short of supplies, and Montrose sent us foraging in the lands of one Rose of Belivat.

We found some good cattle and something else we had not bargained for. An old castle, with a sullen warning bell on the tower and a gaoler who barred our path.

We took his keys, and did not hurt him much, and I went up to find out which of our men were held by Belivat, who was no kindly turnkey. And then I found new troubles. For the prisoner was a woman!

Iseabel Rose, she was, the daughter of Hugh Rose, and her father was holding her for one Walter Dunbar, who vowed she would wed him. Iseabel had a mind of her own, as we soon found out, and came with us back to camp.

And just about then we caught up with the Covenant Highlandmen and we had our hands full. The world knows about the battle of Auldearn. I will say only that we fought against brave men, and one time when the Gordons faltered at the east wall we saw death waiting for us all. But we drove them back with the charge of the Huntly horse, and the banner of Kintail went down, with the last circle of the MacRaes dying around it.

Iseabel Rose proved her mettle that day, and the following Monday we took her down to Lochloy, where she had wanted to go. She was looking for a certain ship-master there, who happened to be Margaret Anderson's uncle, and it was her purpose to flee to Edinburgh.

But the news the ship builder told us put that thought away forever. Edinburgh was plague-stricken, and not a boat would sail from Lochloy for months! And on the heels of this we learned that the road back was even more perilous. For Hugh Rose had ridden into our camp with Dunbar, demanding his daughter—the girl we had vowed to protect!

CHAPTER V

(CONTINUED)

ALICK ANDERSON stood at his door and watched us go up the sandy way, but not for long. Margaret went with downcast head and did not look back. I did, but the door was shut then, and it had been shut softly, as a sad man would shut it.

At the end of the houses where the made-road split into two tracks, one Nairnwards and the other inland towards Auldearn, Iseabel Rose came to a halt.

"We part here, good friends," said she, low and even.

I looked at her, mouth open. Like enough it was the strong spirit fresh-buzzing in my head that made me forget that this was the end of her road in our company.

"We part here?" I repeated.

"This is Lochloy, and your duty done. It is only for me now to thank you for your great courtesy."

"You stay in this place?"

"That is my own poor concern."

"I would not agree with you as far as that," I protested, feeling full of clear reason, "for it might be held that our duty did not finish until you were safe aboard a boat for Edinburgh. This question, as I see it, has to be considered carefully."

"Ranald Ban MacKinnon!" roared Tadg Mor. "Did you let Martin Somers drink bandy wine?"

"A whole dipper of the warmest liquor this side of France, and he poured it down so quick that I heard it clink at the pit of his stomach."

Tadg Mor looked hard at me.

"Drink softens you, brother," I told him.

"I left you in charge of the wounded, Tadg Mor," Margaret reprimanded him coldly.

"I know—I know." And then he laughed resignedly and turned to Ranald Ban. "Let us give Maurteen his head for a small bit, Ranald Boy."

"We must," the other agreed, "or here we will be and the rear-guard crossing ford o' Spey."

"Ye talk too much," I stopped them, and put my hand on Iseabel Rose's arm. "This young woman, whose concern it is, has said nothing. She is in a narrow place this day, and that is the thing we have to consider. Let us sit yonder."

There was a small hollow in the sand by the side of the track with tussocks of bent-grass crowning the lip of it. There we sat in a circle, all but Black Rab, who knelt on one knee behind his lady's shoulder.

Our heels scooped a rest in the sand, and Ranald Ban winced as the sharp-edged grass pricked his brown legs below the kilt. Anyone seeing us from the hamlet might wonder what evil we were planning.

"Ranald Ban," I began, my head clear as well-water, "I and you and Tadg Mor will leave the ladies out of this, for they are not accustomed to use reason in difficult places. Tell me, is there any bright thought in your mind that might help to resolve this lady's difficulty?"

"I take it," said Ranald Ban, humoring me, "that this lady's difficulty is that she does not want to go back to her home or to that place you took her out of so nice and handy."

"That is my difficulty," she agreed. "I will not go back unless I have to."

Ranald Ban chewed at his hazel for a space and looked sideways at her.

"I do not know what the lady fears," said he.

"I will not hide it from you," she told him meeting his eye fairly. "I am afraid of my father, and I am afraid of the man he would force me to marry."

He looked at her thoughtfully, and it was as if only now he was looking at her for the first time. Maybe the drink was buzzing in his head too, or that a small fever was working in his blood from his wound, but outside the white bandage that Margaret had put on fresh that morning the blood came flushing to his cheek bones, and a vibrant note came into his voice.

"While you are in this company, dark rose," said he, "you need not fear any man."

SHE did not make any answer to that. She was watching her small clenched hand trying to hold its full of the dry fine sand, but the sand kept trickling from the heel of her fist—like youth, joy, life that will not be held.

"Well done, Ranald Ban!" I said. "You have brought us to the very heart of our difficulty." I turned to my foster brother. "You will tell us what you know, Tadg Mor."

"It is soon told. Your father is below in Auldearn looking for you, and he has the ear of Seumas Graham of Montrose."

She did not flinch, but there was a pause before she spoke. "Will Montrose listen?"

"Why not he, with your father and a friend bringing in thirty men to fight for the King?"

"A friend?" Her voice snapped for the first time.

"A man of the Dunbars," Tadg Mor told her. "A gallant tall devil, with hair like my own and hands on him to break a stag's back."

She turned to me. "That is the man. What will Montrose do?"

"What I would do in his place," I told her frankly. "Hand you over to your father for a vapourish young woman with foolish notions, and, like as not, get his own chaplain, the long-winded Mr. Wishart, to marry you off out of hand to cure your whimsies."

"You are frank, indeed," said she.

"And the only way to be in this gap of

danger. That man Dunbar wants you."

"This is the end of the road, then," said Iseabel Rose, opening her hand out of which all the sand had drained, and her eyes went out over the serenity of the sea and of the mountains. "I am only a woman and I may not keep my soul and my body clean. I would that I were drowned deep in that green sea." Her voice struck like a slow bell.

Ranald Ban MacKinnon spoke up then. "There is a place I have in my mind, dark rose, where no fear would touch you."

"What place is that?"

He did not answer her directly, nor did his eyes lift from the sand between his heels. "We brought you out of prison at your own word, and our safe conduct still holds. I am of Clan Randal, and what Clan Randal puts its hand to Clan Randall will finish. Look, now! A small escort through Badenoch and Lochaber, down Loch Linnhe by water, and in five days you would be under Ben More in Mull looking across at the white beaches of Iona. My father, Ailin, has a strong house in that place, and a hand of welcome, and there no fear would touch you."

He looked quickly at her and down again, and she looked for a time at his flaxen head. And then she said slowly:

"The fear I would have in that place is the fear of doing a gallant gentleman a hurt I could not salve."

"I do not know what the lady means," said Ranald Ban.

"I know," said Margaret Anderson. "Mistress Rose, is there no place at all where you could bide in safety till Edinbro opens it gates?"

"There is a place might serve for a month or two if I could get at it. I have an uncle who is a dominie in the King's schools at Aberdeen: my father's brother, a strong Covenanter and no friend to the wild Hugh Rose."

"The road to Aberdeen will be open," said Tadg Mor, "after we get through settling with General Baillie next week."

"Meantime we have to face her father in camp," I reminded him.

"I have a dirk," growled Black Rab Fraser.

"That is a road too," I agreed.

Iseabel Rose opened her hands to us. "Friends, friends, why do I trouble ye? There is no road to safety. Let you and I go our own roads to death."

"I like you fine," I told her then. "There is in you the quality of a man, for your own integrity is dear to you. Holding by that, would you face the scandal of tongues?"

"I will face anything but the danger of falling weak and in love with baseness, for there is bad blood in me."

"That being so, there is one way you can be safe in camp until it is safe for you to leave it for Aberdeen or Edinburgh."

"Or Mull of the mountains," added Ranald Ban.

"Mull surely," I agreed.

"Is there that way?" Her eyes were considering me steadily.

"There is," I said, "and if you will come with me I will tell you what it is."

I was on my feet and my hand out to her. She put hers in mine, and it was dry and very cold, and I knew then that there was fear in the marrow of her bones, notwithstanding that she faced fate so steadfastly.

"Come you too, Margaret Anderson," I ordered.

"Go on, girl," urged Tadg Mor on the hesitating Margaret. "He has his finger on the snarl."

"He's neither to hold nor to bind, drink in him," she protested on her feet. "On with ye then."

I STRODE across the hillocks and the two girls followed. My head was light and my feet were steady, but that sudden big drink of brandywine was curling the devil through all my blood.

I halted on a sandbank crowning the shingle of the shore, and the wavelets ran and soughed to themselves in front of me.

The girls came at my back and I faced round on them, the tall, lissome one, and the small dark one whose lines flowed just as subtly.

"Haver awa now," said Margaret. "Are ye gone daft?"

"I am," said I, "and I will be sorry for myself tomorrow morning. But do not make me angry, Margaret Anderson, for you have been a great trouble on me since the day I saw you sit in your shift, and here is another one now with her trouble on my shoulders. God, but I do not like women!"

"I ken that fine," said Margaret. "But if I am a trouble to you I am nane sorry."

"You dislike us because you are afraid," said Iseabel Rose.

"That is true," I agreed, "however you found it out."

"How is it that my trouble is on your shoulders?"

"Because at this juncture I am the only man you can trust and keep your integrity in your own hands."

"Do you tell me that?' she said a little derisively. "And yet you dislike me?"

"I tell you that I dislike you so that my motive shall not be in doubt."

"Yet I may double them."

"You may, but if ever you come to doubt them you will have cause to be sorry for yourself. Listen now! Your only safe place for the time is in O'Cahan's regiment."

"With my father and Walter Dunbar having the ear of Montrose?"

"Even so. If you are bold enough to go down and say, 'I am a woman of the regiment, there of my own will with Martin Somers,' not even Montrose himself dare put a finger on you. That is the law and the custom of the Gael. But, mark this, to win to that safety you will have to throw your good name to the winds—everything, everything but your own integrity. You will have to be my woman in the camp. That is what I have to tell you."

"Your woman in the camp!" Her voice was slow and her eyes steady on mine. "What does that mean?"

"Nothing that you do not want it to mean. Margaret Anderson will tell you what it means."

"Will Margaret Anderson tell me that?"

"Margaret Anderson has no need to tell anything," said that woman briskly.

"Whatever that means," said the other.

"Think well, Iseabel Rose," I warned her. "The price of safety is high. You will be your own woman, and you can leave camp when you wish, but you will be of very ill-repute amongst women that men call honest."

"You put things clearly," said she, and she turned her back to me, her head up. Margaret Anderson turned away too and looked along the shore towards her uncle's house. And I waited, looking over the dark one's head at the slow lift of the green uplands into the curving brown moors of Cawdor. But in a little while I grew impatient and spoke—with bitterness, I fear.

"It is hard for you, dark lady. You are a lady of blood and in the bit your good name is more precious to you than any inner virtue. Go you home then to your father's house and your red man."

"There you are wrong, surly Englander," she said without turning her head. "My feet are on the road and I will walk it to the end. I am now a woman of the camp in O'Cahan's regiment—but my soul is my own."

And that fine small lady went away from us through the sand, my Irish cloak trailing behind her noble as a queen's robe. Margaret Anderson, without looking at me, followed her, but Margaret's head was down, and her feet no longer sure. I stayed behind, staring

out over the restless green of the seas. But, though my back was turned, I was watching Margaret Anderson's downcast head, and my heart was troubled.

I WENT back to the others then. "Come we down to Auldearn."

"All of us?" queried Ranald Ban.

"All of us. And look you, Ranald Ban! I will not ask you to keep your tongue quiet, for that is beyond your power and mine, but I will ask you to follow my lead in any talk we have with Montrose."

"That is right, Ranald boy," urged Tadg Mor. "He has loosed the snarl, and we will be seeing it in our own time."

"Not a word at all will I let out of me," agreed Ranald Ban.

When we had gone a hundred paces or so Tadg Mor held my shoulder, and I looked behind to see that Margaret was not following. She was facing away from us, her head still down, one foot tapping the ground, a habit of hers in a mood of perplexity. Tadg Mor and I went back to her.

"What is it, girl?" Tadg Mor growled gently.

"Naething," said she without looking up. "I was just thinking I was over short in the temper with Uncle Alick. He would like me fine to stay ae nicht under his roof."

"One night," said I. "That is reasonable. You will be safe enough. We march tomorrow."

She looked up at me then, a warm flash in her gray eyes. "Ae nicht or twa nichts, or three nichts! What is that to you, my fine gentleman?"

"There is our wounded," said I soberly.

"And there is your Iseabel Rose wi' her bonny fine hands, and she a fine lady. I am only a puir lass o' Aberdeen."

And then she turned on her heel, swung her flaxen plaits at us, and marched off towards the hamlet.

"Let her go!" I stopped Tadg Mor, my hand against his breast. "You and I could not force her."

"I know that," he said heavily. "You hurt her, Maurteen. Some way you hurt her with your bitter tongue."

"She is gone now, brother," said I, "and I am sorry, but it might be a good thing if we never set eyes on each other again, for she has been a trouble in my thoughts day and night these many months."

"And in mine too," said Tadg Mor.

MANUS O'CAHAN, our colonel, was waiting for us outside Auldearn, by the side of a belt of lindens in full leaf on the margin of the green park facing the house of Boath. He looked us over with a stern eye.

"Ye are back again then," said he, his eye resting meaningly on Iseabel Rose.

"A poor place to stay long in, yon Lochloy," said Ranald Ban.

"Ye may find Auldearn a poorer place in a short while," said Manus ironically and turned to me. "Martin, if you will be getting me into trouble with our captain-general I will not like it, and you will not like it either. I am after learning that you took this young lady out of her father's prison, and already I knew that she was given a safe conduct to Lochloy. She is back again?"

"She is back again, Colonel," said I, "and I would have you remember that she has been three nights in this camp, and helped with the wounded two whole days."

"For which my thanks. But now her father, Hugh Rose, is here to claim her back."

"We had better see him, then."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"I would say less if I could, Colonel."

"Less or more may not avail you with Montrose." He swung on his heel. "Come

then, all of you, for you are all in this."

And I whispered to Ranald Ban. "Mind what I told you, loose tongue."

"You are as black a skillet as ever I saw," said Ranald Ban.

Behind my shoulder I heard Rab Fraser groan out a deep breath.

"Red man," growled he to Tadg Mor, "if Hugheon Rose sets eye on me I am a dead man."

"Where is that dirk you boasted about?"

"A boast surely! He would kill me like putting his heel on a rat."

"My hand! It would please me greatly to see him try it this day," said Tadg Mor, and there was a grate in his voice that I knew.

"You are in a bad temper, Tadg Mor," I cautioned him over my shoulder.

"I am, Maurteen, and I like it. I will be doing someone a hurt before the day is done, and Meg no longer here to put a thumb on me."

"I will put a thumb on you," I warned him.

Seumas Graham of Montrose, for all his sheltered breeding, could never bide indoors, and that was one of the many reasons the men of the Gael had for admiring him. When he came to us first he had one evil bout of fever in the hills above Dee, but after that he took to the life like a duck to water. He could sleep sound as a bairn in the rain under a wet plaid, march or run with the hardiest of us, sit a horse as surely as Nat Gordon himself, put an arrow in the slot with any man of Clan Finlay; and he could laugh in the fork of hardship and crack a joke with an Irishman in the face of death. He sat now on the sandstone steps of Boath under a Greek portico, his body-armor laid aside and his hair loose to the breeze. There was a lace collar to his neck and a brilliant rose sash at his waist.

His staff, about and behind him, were much more formal in dress and manner; all but Colkitto, his major-general, who leant a careless shoulder against a pillar and held a long flagon in his hand. Alasdair nodded his head and grinned at me; any pother concerning a woman did not trouble Alasdair.

I knew all of Montrose's staff by sight and name, but there were three men now present that did not belong to it. One of them I had met already—John Balfour, the minister of Ardclach. He stood behind all the others, his back to the wall, his rugged face white and stern, and his eyes under heavy brows fixed on Iseabel Rose. I could put a name to the others too, though I had not seen them before.

One was a short, thick-bodied man in a leather jerkin. A thick, strong body like that should carry a massive head on bull neck, but out of that man's heavy shoulders rose a long round neck and a long lean head carrying a hawk's nose and a slit of mouth slantingly a—smile at one corner. There was something snakelike in that long neck and lean head. He was Hugh Rose.

The other was a man I could like, given the chance: a big, finely shaped man in half armor, a fresh-faced red man, handsome and gallant as any man there, with nothing weak or loose about him. He stood at ease, his arms folded, and his bold blue eyes half smiling at Iseabel Rose, not careless of her, yet not greedy for her. He seemed easily sure of himself, hinting in all his bearing that he liked a hard game with a woman for the sake of the salt of having his own way in the end. That was Walter Dunbar of Moyness.

MONTROSE rose to his feet when he saw us coming in a clump, Iseabal Rose between Ranald Ban and me; being courtier bred he would not stay seated before any woman. He lifted finger and bowed a head to our salute and then spoke over shoulder.

"Your daughter, Hugheon Rose?"

"That man is no longer yours. He is my man now!"

"So it is said, Lord Marquis." His voice was light for his great body. "She is the one I am looking for, anyway."

To Montrose's frown was added Colkitto's laughter. He lifted his flagon to the lady and drank, his red-brown eye roving from her to Ranald Ban. And Ranald Ban cursed him under his breath.

Montrose looked at Ranald Band and nodded.

"Glad your wound does not incommode you, MacKinnon," he said. "You got it gallantly."

"I could do fine wanting it, Montrose," said Ranald Ban.

"And I could wish you would keep your gallantry for fight," said Montrose and turned to O'Cahan. "Have these gentlemen explained the bad business?"

"There was nothing to explain, Captain General," said I before O'Cahan could open his mouth.

Montrose's eyes crinkled in a way they had when he was close to the brink of half-amused irritation. He was not a blunt man. There was nothing he liked better than an undercurrent of meaning. That was another reason why he was at home with the Gael. Many a night I had seen him in a group round a camp-fire listening to and making talk worth the making.

"Nothing to explain!" said he. "So this is everyday work, and young ladies can be wrested out of their father's jurisdiction for a holiday to overlook a battle. I saw Mistress Rose with you on the kirk mound on Friday morning."

I had been sure that his eye had never rested on her that morning of the battle. And at once I knew that I could not fool this man, but I had to try.

"We did not wrest this lady out of anywhere, Captain General," I began. "The lady will tell you that."

And there I stopped, for there came over me a sudden bleak shame of the thing I was getting this young woman to do. The drink was dying in me, and I could no longer conjure up any fine vision of the greatness of throwing one's good name after one's shoe to save one's soul.

But that young woman boldly took her own fate in her own two hands and did not give me time to act on my change of mind. Her dark eyes met Montrose's gray ones, and her voice was clear.

"I am here of my own free will, Lord Marquis, three days and three nights. I am a woman of the camp with Martin Somers in Colonel O'Cahan's regiment."

"*Chreesta Tigearna!*" That was Ranald MacKinnon.

It was done now. There was an abrupt silence, and then feet shuffled, and all eyes looked at Iseabel Rose and looked away again—all but Montrose's. His voice came coldly.

"Will Adjutant Somers confirm?"

"I have enlisted her," said I, "in the nursing corps under Margaret Anderson."

"That settles it," cried Colkitto, and oh, but I was glad to hear that impulsive voice!

Montrose looked up at him where he leaned against the pillar, ankles crossed easily.

"There is no more to be said, Seumas Graham."

Montrose was face to face with a law and custom that he dared not break. Breaking that law would gain him thirty good men to his king's cause, but it might lose him a clan and a regiment. A leader has to move carefully with an army of Gaeldom. He knew that Colkitto was wise and cunning in a question like this, and that his seemingly impulsive decision was given to help his leader in a difficult place. And he also knew that there was more in this business than met the eye, and that the red man of the Dunbar's had a finger in it somewhere. Abruptly he shot the young woman a question.

"Your age, young lady?"

"Two-and-twenty past, Captain General."

"Old enough for any choice," said Colkitto.

There was another gap stopped. If she had been under age Montrose could override the law.

Hugh Rose laughed a high mad shrill skirl of laughter. His long head was thrown forward like the head of a reptile ready to strike, his close-set black eyes unwinking on his daughter, and his twisted mouth open to pour out its venom. I shrank within myself. But before any word could come the big Dunbar slapped a hand on Rose's shoulder.

"A word in your ear, Hugh," he said loudly, and drew the man aside. And the dark man, who seemed to have lost all control a minute agone, shut his mouth crookedly and allowed himself to be drawn away.

"There is my father for you," murmured Iseabal Rose.

"I do not mislike the other," I murmured back.

"But I do."

"And so we are here."

Montrose's eyes were studying us under his firm brows. He was exasperated with us, but would not show it. We were playing a game and he knew it, but he could prick us still.

"We will not make or break a law, Sir Alasdair," he said, his eye still on us, "but within the law I can put Martin Somers and the woman out the bounds of the camp."

"It is your right, surely," agreed Alasdair weightily.

And Tadg Mor saluted and his voice grated. "I go too, Montrose."

And Ranald Ban MacKinnon bowed from the hips to the lady.

Montrose had difficulty not to smile.

"Ye will be loyal enough to one another, I know that," he said chagrinedly.

"And to you too, Montrose," said Ranald Ban. "We await your orders."

But at that juncture Rose and Dunbar resolved the difficulty. They came to the front together and Hugh Rose's mouth was more twisted than ever.

"I have this only to say, Lord Marquis: this girl is no daughter of mine any longer."

And Walter Dunbar bent his strong shoulders and said:

"We can give you assurance that this will make no difference in our loyalty."

It was done as easy as that.

We got our curt dismissal then, and Montrose turned and went up the steps into the house, his staff following. Alasdair, going last, called out to me over his shoulder.

"Keep your two bonny ones well apart, Maurteen."

"A narrow thing for ye," said Manus O'Cahan, still stern. "I hope Montrose will not hold it in mind."

"Will you, Manus?" enquired Ranald Ban.

"I will if it spoils your duty," said Manus, and followed Alasdair.

WE had not gone twenty paces before a high voice stopped us.

"Black Rab Fraser!"

We turned, and there was Hugh Rose coming at us from the steps. Walter Dunbar came after, but some distance behind and slowly. Not that Rose came quickly. He seemed in no hurry. His head was thrust forward, his eyes, fixed as a snake's, on Rab Fraser, and his hand on the dagger at his hip.

"This man is mine at least," said he, "and him I will have."

Black Rab Fraser, half turned towards him, stood dumb and helpless as an ox, and I wondered at the wicked force of this black Rose that could so dominate a man that, in another place, had shown such readiness to fight and die.

I do believe that Black Rab would have stood there dumbly and taken dagger stroke if Iseabal Rose had not cried out:

"He will kill."

"He will kill no one," said Tadg Mor softly and stepped between. Tadg Mor was still in a bad temper; I knew that from the silkiness of his voice.

"Out of my way, red calf!" cried Hugh Rose, his dagger out of its sheath.

But no sooner had it taken the light than Tadg Mor had the wrist of the hand that held it, that wrist wrenched, and the dagger in his own hand.

"Still! you black snake!" And the dagger point was firm against the front of the leather jerkin. "That man is no longer yours. He is my man now."

Rose strained back a stride from the press of dagger, but Tadg Mor stepped smoothly after, and the point pinched. The man stilled.

"He is my man," said Tadg Mor, "but I am urging you not to mind that. He is your man if you can take him."

And one of his feet moved like a lash in one of his wrestling clips, and Rose was flat on his back. Tadg Mor snapped the dagger blade between his fingers and threw the pieces on him.

"There is a small lesson to begin with," said he, and turned his back, grinning pleasantly, the temper cooled in him.

Walter Dunbar lifted Rose to his feet and Rose rubbed his wrenched wrist, his eyes seeking his daughter.

"That is a man of my regiment, Rose of Belivat," said she. "You will know where to find me."

He smiled his slow crooked smile at her, shook himself free from his friend and went back towards the house of Boath.

"Are you over your temper now, Tadg Mor?" I put to him.

"I am so, Maurteen, and I hope the lady will forgive me."

"I would forgive you, fine man," said she evenly, "even if your point bit deeper."

"Girl, girl!" I cried. "How can you hate your father so?"

"I hate myself for being his daughter. Now you know the bad blood that is in me and the road it sends the Roses."

But now Ranald Ban MacKinnon, smiling too, was facing Dunbar, eye to eye.

"Dirk or claymore, which is your favourite weapon, tall man?"

"I will tell you that in my own time, highlandman," said Dunbar easily. "This time we are fellow soldiers."

I was tired of this and the brandywine sour in me.

"Enough, enough!" I cried. "This has ended well and let it stay so. We will go now."

"Come on, Ranald avic!" said Tadg Mor, and the two marched off shoulder to shoulder.

I took Iseabal Rose's arm and turned her round, and we followed after. But Dunbar kept pace at my shoulder, and Iseabal Rose pressed my hand against her side.

"Are you not on the wrong road this time?" I said to him.

He chuckled pleasantly. "It is not a safe road, I will admit. But I would like to come to an understanding with you."

"We understand each other very well."

He looked aside at me. "You are the man that took Mistress Iseabal out of her father's prison—Captain Martin Somers, is it not?"

"And you the man that helped put her there—Walter Dunbar of Moyness?'

"The lady told you so?"

"I told him that I would never marry you, Wat Dunbar," said the lady.

"He must have a quick way with ladies," said Wat Dunbar.

"And you a foolish one," I told him. "Could you not take this lady's dismissal?"

He chuckled again.

"Girls can be made to change their minds, and the harder the change the deeper. Did you not know that also?"

"Let us leave girls out of this business, then. If you are so learned about dismissals, I wonder would you accept a man's one?"

"It would have to be strongly put."

"Very well! If you in any way trouble Iseabal Rose while she is in O'Cahan's regiment Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh and Ranald Ban MacKinnon—there they are in front of us—will not like it."

"You will not like it yourself."

"Tadg Mor and Ranald Ban are much handier cutting windpipes."

He laughed at that and heartily too. "That is putting it strongly, indeed. I know where you stand now, and I will tell you where I stand. I know ye had some plan in mind that miscarried, and that ye are planning afresh. I know that this woman is not yours; she is not that kind. I know that she has twisted you round her finger for her own purposes, and that some day she will be my wife."

"You know enough and to spare," said I.

"I do. And now I will give you my promise. I will not trouble Iseabal Rose in any way while she is in your regiment, and I will only ask you to remember that I also have some practice in cutting windpipes."

And at that he turned on his heel and strode off, a tall and gallant figure.

"There is Walter Dunbar for you," said Iseabal Rose.

"What seems to be wrong with him?"

"He likes his own way and gets it after his own fashion."

"Not with a certain one."

"He is as sure of her as of himself."

"He has a sound man's parts, and besides—"

She shook my arm. "Bairn! Is that what Margaret Anderson calls you? Do not pretend to be wise and bitter."

I dropped her arm.

"You are as bad as Margaret any day," I cried.

"Was she bad?"

"No," I said and went on head down.

But she put her hand within my arm. "Poor Martin Somers! You know that girl is not coming back."

"I was afraid. Tadg Mor will go down for her in the morning."

"If you yourself will go she might come."

"I will not go," said I, and she said no more.

WE had come to the bothy below the kirk mound. It was evening and the sun was slanting through the door. Tadg Mor and his new man were inside talking to Sorcha MacNeill, who was preparing his supper, but Ranald Ban stayed outside, and when Iseabal went under the lintel he pulled me by the sleeve to the gable end. He was inclined to be angry and his hazel was chewed to the last inch.

"That was a terrible thing you did, Maurteen!"

"What was a terrible thing?"

"Getting her to say that in the face of men."

"It would not be said at all if you and Tadg Mor, seeing I had drink taken, had dipped my head under the breakers a couple of times; but, being said, how else, will you tell me, could we keep the girl safe in camp?"

"Yes, but safe?"

"Safe from everyone but you."

He pulled himself up and his eyes went dangerous. "Better be careful, Martin."

"Very careful, Ranald Ban. If any harm comes to her I will blame you."

"Say that again."

"In another way, and so that you will follow. You may have dreams in your head of the Island of Mull, and you will have ten days or so, thanks to me, to smit another with your dreams. But listen! If your dreams come true, when you present the lady to your father above your white beaches of Iona, you will be able to look your father in the eye."

He glared at me half a minute and then he spat out the last of his hazel stick.

"You bloody Irisher!" said he, and, turning on his heel like Walter Dunbar, strode furiously up the lane. A hot-tempered man. I often wonder since how my neck escaped breaking at his hands or at Tadg Mor's.

We had a visitor before we sat to food. The sun was low in the west and I was admiring the golden red of a beam shining across the floor when a long black shadow was cast along it. The caster of that shadow was John Balfour, the minister.

He had no more than bent under the lintel, with a salute off his tongue, before our Iseabal Rose made accusation against him.

"Did you repent of your good deed, then?"

But he only shook his head at her, hurt in his deep eyes.

"You came down with them?"

"To warn ye. I had word with Colonel O'Cahan." He turned to me. "Ye were at Lochloy?"

She answered for me. "There is no boat out of Lochloy. The plague is in Edinbro."

I saw many things moving in his mind, but all he said was, "I am to blame."

She read that in her own way. "Lost amongst the barbarous Irish?"

But she could not anger this man, and why she tried to I do not know. He smiled sadly at her.

"One could be sorry for your Irish gentlemen."

"Through her guard." I commended him. "Reverend sir, will you eat with us?"

He hesitated. "Let me not trouble—"

"Sit down, man!" she shot at him. "My Irish gentlemen will not poison you."

"I will teach you a little discipline tomorrow, young lady," I warned her.

John Balfour dipped his fingers in the dish with us, saying a grace under his breath out of deference to Sorcha MacNeill and Tadg Mor. I do not remember any talk, because I was thinking things over in a mind that was no longer crystal but muddled. An explanation was due to this man, but I did not know how to make it. For some reason Iseabal Rose remained obdurate against him, and in the end put him a query, half bitter.

"Have you no advice to give me, John Balfour?"

He contemplated her dark calmness awhile.

"No!" he said then. "I will not advise you at all, Iseabal, though I came with that intent. There is something in you that moves you to trust men that can be trusted. I will call it the finger of God, and it will hold you back from an end that is ignoble." He rose to his feet. "My thanks to ye all, friends. I must reach Ardclach before nightfall!"

He went out of the house without again looking at Iseabal Rose. Tadg Mor and I went with him. We accompanied him out of the village and to the head of the first brae, not that he ran any risk in the camp, where we had some royalist ministers of his cloth. We were silent enough on the road, but when he reached me his hand in farewell, I gripped it hard and forced myself to say:

"No harm has come to Iseabal Rose."

"I know that."

"No harm will come to her that I can help."

"I know that too, my friend."

"You may think it an ill thing, the thing she said to Montrose, but it was the only way I saw then of holding her safe from her father and the other. You will believe that."

"I believe it."

"There was nothing else in my mind. We are still ready to give her a safe conduct to any place she thinks safe—Edinburgh or Aberdeen."

"Aberdeen?"

"She has an uncle there."

"I doubt if he is to be trusted." He looked at me consideringly and smiled. "I wonder why we—you and I—are so eager to help her?"

I wondered too. Was it just admiration for her cool courage? Or had she some secret force in her to impel men any road she wanted? That last thought frightened me.

"Master Balfour," I implored him, "come with us to Aberdeen or Edinburgh. There are men of your faith in the army, and Montrose is a strong Kirk man. I think she is angry with you because you will not come. You are not against the King?"

He shook his head sadly. His eyes were steady on mine.

"I have thought it all out long ago, Master Somers. Joining the King now would be no more than pandering to the blind urges of the human heart. No! There is a spark amongst my poor wild ones that may yet blow into a flame of goodness, and that spark I will stay here to nourish as best I can. God be with you, my brothers!"

He turned away and left us, and we stood looking after till the gloaming covered him between the blanketing shroud of the dark trees.

"NO one could make me believe it," said Tadg Mor, "but you get good men everywhere, even in the Kirk." And then he swung to me, and a frown came between his eyes. "Maurteen, I am troubled in my mind."

"I know that."

He rubbed the angle of his strong jaw and his voice was gloomy. "Maybe it would be better for you and for me to have nothing at all to do with women—and here we are with two of them on our hands."

"We have fifty on our hands."

"But only two that count, and two that do not like each other."

"And no reason for it."

"You hurt our Margaret today—some way you hurt her with your bitter, drunken tongue."

"I was bitter enough."

"Could it be that she saw you had a liking for the little dark rose?"

"That she could not see."

"Mind you, the little one is a girl that a man like you could grow to like." His eyes shifted away from mine.

"Wait!" said I. "There is no girl in the world that I like better than Margaret Anderson, and I will tell her that tomorrow, and I will tell her other things as well, and they will be bitter things."

After a time he said, "Nothing will come between you and me, my brother."

But I did not see Margaret Anderson on the morrow.

Tuesday morning, before we marched, Tadg Mor went down to Lochloy to convoy her into camp, but he came back without her.

"She came to the door herself," he told us perplexedly, "and there was a coldness on her face, and her hand did not reach for my ear. 'Are you ready, Meg girl?' says I. 'No,' says she. 'I will stay a while longer with my uncle, and when I want ye I will send for ye.' 'Martin Somers has something to say to you,' says I then, and she stopped me. 'If Martin Somers has anything to say,' says she, 'let him come and say it.' And she shut the door in my face. She was in no temper at all, mind you, my ear handy and all, but she shut the door so fast that she near caught my nose in it."

"That would be the fault of the nose," said Ranald Ban, who was listening. "Why did you not drive in the door with your shoulder and bring her in on your shoulder?"

"The thought was in my mind," agreed Tadg Mor.

"I think," said Iseabal Rose, "that she will come in on her own feet if Martin Somers will go down and ask her."

Indeed it was in my mind to go down and reason with her, but I put the thought aside.

"She is safe enough with Moray under our hands," was what I said. "Let her bide a few days with her uncle. He is a lonely man."

"If it is of him you are thinking," said our dark rose.

But I did not see Margaret Anderson for seven long weeks; and when I saw her she and Tadg Mor and myself were in the very jaws of death.

CHAPTER VI

"I WANT YE NOW."

WALTER DUNBAR of Moyness and myself walked together through a wood of Scots pine somewhere behind the hamlet of Alford in the shire of Aberdeen. That was on Tuesday, the first day of July, seven weeks after Auldearn, and we were expecting another warm fight the following morning.

I had given a final look-over to my wounded station behind the lines, and, with time on my hands, was now strolling forward to the camping place that Tadg Mor had established for our party

in the foreground of the gallows hill, overlooking the river and the valley of the Don. Dunbar had joined me in the main camp, and we walked along side by side talking amicably enough. It was a warm summer evening and I was in my shirt-sleeves.

Walter Dunbar had not broken his word to Montrose or to us, though we had half-expected, half-hoped that he would desert the army after his failure to secure Iscabal Rose at Auldearn. Hugh Rose, pleading his age for a hard campaign, had gone home from Elgin, but he left his ten men with Dunbar's twenty, and thirty good men they were, though all their kin—Dunbars, Baillies, and the great Kilravock Roses—were out with the Covenant. Moray-bred on the borders of the Highlands, they had the hardy qualities of both breeds, and a dourness all their own. Once in a rearguard action at the ford of Avon near Ballindalloch they held the left bank against the whole weight of Balcarre's horse, and Dunbar himself, in a fair broadsword fight, killed the field cornet and brought in his pennant.

I could find nothing at all wrong with Walter Dunbar, and in another situation might have grown to easy friendship with him. He was gallant and good company, and amongst men he had fine soldierly ways; it was no business of ours if he had ways of his own with women so long as he left ours alone. He had kept his word and never once pestered Iseabal Rose. He was often in our lines in friendly ease, and behaved all the time as a soldier should. Tadg Mor actually liked him, and more than once Ranald Ban told him a story and was pleased with his laughter. But, on occasion, I saw Ranald Ban sizing him up with the swordsman's cold eye.

We came now to where the wood thinned and could see open country in front of us. Tadg Mor, with some of the women, had thrown up a shelter within the margin of the pines, and some of our little company were taking their ease in front of it. I could see Tadg Mor's red head and great shoulders hunched over something gripped between his knees; and there was Ranald Ban MacKinnon's flaxen pow.

Walter Dunbar stopped walking, and I heard the deep draw of his breath, as he sought for words.

"I am thinking," said he, "that only one of us will be welcome in yon company—and not too welcome at that."

I looked up at him.

"A great pity," said I, "that you are not honest with yourself."

"With you I am."

"If you were honest you were foolish also. How could you hope to improve your cause with the daughter by letting her father impound her?"

"By teaching her sense, other ways failing."

"You did not know the lady very well."

"I know women, and they are all much alike."

"And you would force her to wed you?"

"For her own good in the end, as well as mine. Mistress of Moyness and my wife, she would be a lady of Moray, and not a lowly one. And she would learn contentment, I know."

"You are not a young man, but what do you know of wedded life?"

"I was wedded once, a foolish lad of eighteen, and a widower at twenty. That taught me something." He stuck his hands together and there was a desperate note in his voice. "I know I am a fool. All the wicked looseness in my life is coming home to me. But God, Somers, that dark one is twisted into my very marrow. I must win her or die."

He turned on his heel and strode off through the wood. It was the first time that his iron reserve had broken, and somehow I was sorry for him and afraid. Death only could beat him. Death only.

I WALKED round to the front of the shelter and the group sitting there looked up at me with careless, friendly eyes. It was a sunny evening in the heart of summer and the brown turfy soil under the trees was as dry as bone. I sat down a little apart near by an ant heap of pine needles and small twigs as big as a haycock. I mind that small fact very well, because I was foolish enough to sit down in the path of the busy little soldier beasts, and, presently, swearing to myself, had to shift ground in a hurry over to where Iseabal Rose sat on my cloak in the crouch of a root.

She was busy sewing a bone button on the breast of the tunic I had taken off the Aberdeen minister—a shabby tunic now, but still serviceable. One small foot was thrust out below the hem of her wine-red skirt, and showed its silver buckle, but the other foot was hidden, and the shoe off that one was gripped between Tadg Mor's knees, where he sat handily stitching on a new half-sole. Black Rab Fraser, that faithful man, crouched as ever on one knee behind her shoulder.

Ranald Ban MacKinnon was turned on his elbow at the other side of our dark rose, leaning towards her, and as I pulled out a corner of the cloak to sit on, he frowned at me.

I looked from Iseabal Rose to Ranald Ban, and in my own mind decided that it would be a very fitting thing if love lay between these two; and I thought that it might, and had a queer small pang so thinking. Tall and blithely built, with hair of golden flax, he might have been one of the Red Branch Knights that had gone out to war behind Cuchulain, the great hero. The small white scar of his arrow wound marked one brown cheek, but the other had healed without leaving mark.

The first time I had seen Iseabal Rose in the Bell-Tower of Ardclach there had been a soft feminine loveliness about her, and her quietness and her strength came on one as a surprise. She was still quiet and still strong, but seven weeks of the hardest campaigning had kneaded the softness of soft living out of her. Now she was a small shapely bit of a girl, as Tadg Mor would say, and her eyes looked bigger and darker and the whites of them were touched with blue.

As I looked at her now I had an eerie feeling that she and Margaret Anderson were moving on parallel roads. We had taken Margaret out of the stocks, and she was to be with her uncle in ten days, but she had not reached that place for ten months. We had taken Iseabal Rose out of her father's prison, and she was to be with her uncle in Aberdeen in ten days, but already she had been with us for seven weeks. How long more?

The truth is, we had found the road to Aberdeen a difficult one to clear. William Baille, the Covenant general, was a prudent strategist and refused to stand and fight until the chances were all in his favor. He made it a campaign of march and countermarch, trying to force us between him and the sea, and time was on his side; for the clansmen, eager to get back to their own glens for the summer work, kept trickling away from the army, and in seven weeks our force was down to two thousand men. It was then that Baillie decided to overwhelm us. He had four first line regiments, seven squadrons of horse and the Aberdeen levies against us, but our tough little army did not mind the odds. Fight we would. Montrose drew us back to his own chosen position behind the Don, and here now we were awaiting Baillie's attack.

Iseabal Rose had taken Margaret's place, and had filled it in her own way and a different way. She came of a different tradition and a different breed—lairds and fighters, saints and devils, men and women of toughness and courage and intolerance.

She went through that campaign as

hardily as the most war-hardened camp-woman in Colkitto's train. She made her own little corps of women about her, ruled them, laughed with them, worked their troubles out for them, made them her very own, and yet, somehow, stood apart. She would ride a pony or march on her feet, handy as a hillman, and come singing into camp; and with hurt men she had the healing touch and a firm gentleness that served me many an hour.

But she was no better than Margaret Anderson. She was no better and no finer in any way. I insisted that to myself as I looked at her brown loveliness against the pale trunk of the pine tree that soughed softly to itself above her in a strange lonely contentment with its own hushed sorrow.

I wondered why Margaret had forsaken us. Tadg Mor and I had taken her out of the stocks to a new full-flowing life, and there was a tie that bound the three of us. I sighed and turned away to look over the wide scene before me.

THE river Don made a fine sweeping double loop below us. Beyond it lay the township of Forbes, and I caught the flash and glint of steel amongst the houses. We had an outpost planted there to insure that Covenant outriders did not get across to disclose our position. Behind the township the land swept slowly upwards in great curves—a rich country of woods and pasture and bright corn—into smooth moorland hills that, still slowly, lifted into one tall mountain that tilted a bald head over to the west towards the sun coming down yellow on its shoulder. A peaceful scene indeed, and, but for that glint of steel, no sign of war anywhere. But I knew that the Covenanters were advancing behind one of the nearer folds.

"A great pity," I mused aloud, "that men should go to war at all."

Iseabal Rose, a thread in her white teeth, turned her head sideways.

"Indeed I often do wonder, Martin, how you are here amongst the reckless fighting Irish."

"Ask Tadg Mor there. It was he brought me."

"Why did you do that, Tadg Mor?"

"Why not?" said Tadg Mor grunting over the awl. "If I got in a tight corner I wanted him handy. Do not you be fooled by the buttermilk mouth of him. There he was, growing an old fellow before his time, and blinding the sight of his eyes over writings about drenches and herbs and broken collar blades—and I well knowing he was a young colt inside him. And two young colts we were on the flanks of Mount Leinster. We had an aunt, an old single girl, and she used to leather the two of us, as a matter of duty, night and morning, and that was a grand salve for us before and after. A good woman and quick in the hand—Meg Anderson often reminded me of her."

His hands went lax over the buckled shoe, his chin sank on his breast, and his eyes looked out under his red brows at the tilted cowl of Benachie.

But he did not see Benachie, as I knew by his fixed look. He was seeing Margaret Anderson as I had seen her a minute agone.

"But you brought him soldiering?" Iseabal insisted.

He came out of his muse and resumed his stitching.

"That is true enough, and I often wonder at it, for he was the devil and all to go his own road. When the war started Colonel John Preston raised one of his regiments along the Nore and Slaney, and says I to the lad here: 'Look at the two of us—you blinding your eyes and me wasting my time at locks and bolts and other things not so good for me. Let us go soldiering for a piece and see life.' 'We will not,' says he. 'Very well so,' says I. 'All the same,'

says he, 'we might as well go, and you with your mind set on it'."

Ranald Ban laughed. "Martin Somers," said he, "reminds me of a man I knew in Mull who would not steal as much as a chicken till his friends persuaded him."

"And will you tell me, fine talker," demanded Tadg Mor, "how Martin Somers going soldiering reminded you of that night robber of Mull?"

"Because Martin had the urge in him all the time, and let a big red sheep's head think it was doing all the planning."

There was a pleasant crinkle about Iseabal's dark eyes.

"True enough," she said, "the first time I saw you in the doorway of Ardclach tower you put me in mind of Auld Clootie, and frightened me to the marrow."

"It might be the Indian blood that he talks about that put the fear on you," suggested Ranald Ban.

"That could be," I agreed. "I heard my father tell that the Indians of Virginia were the most bloody-minded race of men in the known world, smiling at wounds and death, and singing under torture. And once he saw a young chief of the Monacans, naked to the breechclout, kill a fully armed bully man of the English with his bare hands."

"And that blood runs in you!" wondered she.

"I could not tell you. I hate pain and do my killing by proxy. My mother I never saw and my father was taciturn, but my brother, two years older, is as fair as Ranald Ban, and near as foolish. Still, a serving man that came out of Virginia with my father—that was the time King James sold him a small estate in Ireland—that man used say that my grandmother was a full-blooded princess of the tribe of Pipeshaw on the James River. That is all I know."

Iseabal smoothed my threadbare old coat with gentle fingers and put me a question in that husky way she sometimes had.

"When this war is over what will you do, Martin?"

"If we win out of Scotland, Tadg Mor and I have a house and lands below the Walsh Mountains in Leinster, and the first time he opens his mouth to plan a new campaign I will open a blood vessel for him."

"And there is the black Indian blood for you!" said Tadg Mor.

But picturing our own peace in the years to come I was minded of our dark lady's future, and a trouble that was not new came to me. I touched a finger on her brown wrist.

"Iseabal, it might be near the end of your road with us."

"But not the end of the road," she said without looking up.

"If we win tomorrow or the next day—"

"Ye will win. Before Auldearn I spoke foolishly of what the men of Moray would deal you, but now I know ye will not be beaten but by mischance. Ye will win indeed."

"And the road to Aberdeen will be open."

"Where else can I go?"

"There is Edinburgh?"

"And there is Mull of the Mountains?" said Ranald Ban quietly.

"I can see it through your eyes, white Ranald: the high head of Ben More above the purpling of the heather, and the gray royal tombs of Iona across the green water."

"And is it not bonny as you see it?" said Ranald.

She shook her head slowly.

"Nothing would be asked that you would not give," whispered Ranald.

"Nor would I take what I could not give. My time is nearly done in this camp now, where I have been happy and the care of men about me."

"And you doing a noble share of the caring," said Tadg Mor softly.

"It has been good and I shall not forget, for it has restored my faith. But the time has come at last when I know there is nothing more here that I can take, and I must go—I must go." she placed my old tunic across my knees and gave me a sudden hot flash of her eyes. "And when I am gone you will send for your Margaret Anderson."

And as she spoke that girl's name a rotten stick crunched under a heel in the wood behind. I looked over my shoulder to see two men coming towards us between the trees. One of the two was Walter Dunbar of Moyness.

THE man who came through the wood with Walter Dunbar I did not recognize at first, and when I did I sprang to my feet, trampling my tunic. He was Alick Anderson, shipmaster of Lochloy, Margaret's uncle. He was in his seaman's blue cloth, with a tricorne hat and horse boots, and it was plain that he was spent with travel, his eyes without light and his cheeks above the white beard hollowed with weariness.

"Alick Anderson of Lochloy would like a word with you, Martin Somers," said Walter Dunbar.

My heart was strangely hollow and I could think of nothing to say, but I kicked my tunic out of the way and made to go aside.

"It is not private," Alick Anderson lifted his hand. He looked about at us, unsure, almost shy, and bowed to the lady. "Ye are aye in the one company and keep well together. It is good to see you so bonny, Mistress Iseabal, and I am thinking the company does not mislike you."

"I chose it carefully, Master Alick. Are you well?"

"I am well." He hesitated then, and his hand came up to his beard. He did not know how to begin, and I was afraid to put him the blunt question. I looked at Tadg Mor to see if he had more courage, but Tadg Mor was swallowing his words with a gulp, and twisting Iseabal's shoe in his hand.

"Sit down here by me, Alick," Iseabal Rose invited him, patting my cloak.

He unjointed himself stiffly to the ground, took off his tricorne hat and looked into the crown of it, wondering what to say next. But there Tadg Mor helped him by blurting out in a voice strangely loud and unnaturally careless:

"But how is Meg—how is our Margaret?"

"She is grippit," said Alick Anderson, with a little hopeless jerk of his head.

"Grippit?" Tadg Mor was on his feet.

"Ay! The Kirk has her." He said it tonelessly.

My legs went pithless and I sank down cross-legged in front of him.

"In Aberdeen?"

"Not yet. But Aberdeen it will be, early or late. Brodie of Brodie is holding her in the palace of Spynie. Ye ken it—three miles out of Elgin?"

"We marched three times round it after Auldearn," said Ranald Ban, "but it did not fall to us."

"That's the place, and there she is."

"Brodie will not deal with her himself?" asked Iseabal Rose, the coolest head there.

"Better if he did, for if he is hard in the rind he has a kind core. Na! To Aberdeen she must be sent when word comes, and ye will ken what that means to a poor lass that has been in the Irish army."

"It means death."

"When did it happen—tell us all you know, Alick," Iseabal urged him.

"Ay, will I. Eight days ago. I was aye feared and tried to keep her hidden. Ye can blame me fairly for holding her, e'en though she was my ain blood. Still I did tell her it was no safe place for her, but she wouldna be moved. And then I hurried the work on the *Moray*

Quoine, and cursed myself for having the cordage down, or we would hae slippit out to sea in ballast and north-about for France. But it was not to be. The word got to Brodie, new back from Stirling, and he rode down with Kinnaird of Culbin and whippit her away. He could have jugged me as well for harboring her, but he kennt it was against nature to give up one's niece. That's the kind of him. All he gave me was a tongue lashin', and I gave it to him back."

"She is in Spynie Tower?"

"That is where he took her, for he was afraid of the Gordons. She was in it four days ago."

He looked into the crown of his hat, and went on, as it were reading out of it, with a steady dourness, determined to get his mind rid of what was in it.

"There was nothing I could do, and no appeal against the Kirk; and then I minded the way she spoke of her officer Martin Somers and of a big red man she called Tadg Mor"—he gestured a hand towards that man without lifting his eyes—"and I was minded of the day ye called on me at Lochloy and the way she was proud of her ain gentlemen. Ye were far away and only here and there a rumor of ye, but there was no chance I wouldna grasp at, so without weighing chances I saddled horse.

"But when I came down through this wood and saw ye sitting here at ease in the quiet evening I knew myself for a fool. For ye are strange and foreign sojering men facing battle, and I couldna hope that ye would make the business of a poor Aberdeen lassie your business. And e'en if ye did, what chance is there to break down the strong walls o' David's Tower in Spynie? An auld fool! But I've said my say, an' if ye tell me it is no business to embark on I will understand fine."

"It is my business," said Tadg Mor, slow and heavy.

The shipmaster looked at him, and his eyes were the very eyes of Margaret, now that the light of hope was breaking in them.

"I have no other business on top of earth till Margaret Anderson is free, or till I am dead. Look at me!" Tadg Mor struck his broad breast. "I will tear down Spynie Tower stone by stone to get at her."

"And I at your shoulder," cried Ranald Ban.

"And Black Rab Fraser as well," growled that man.

"I have thirty men," said Dunbar firmly.

I had nothing to say, but I watched the old man's head bent to his knees and his shoulders shaking as he murmured: "I might have known, an' she sae prŏud o' her ain men."

BUT Iseabal Rose brought us back to reality, making herself one with us.

"We cannot take David's Tower, thirty men or ten times thirty, and we ought to know that first thing."

We did know it. Spynie Palace, as it was named, was a jumble of ruins and one mighty rectangular tower four or five stories high on the shore of the Moray Firth. It had been the palace and stronghold of the old fighting bishops of Moray, and the strongest place between Spey and Ness.

It was now used as a shelter-hole by the covenanting lords and burghers of Moray. Brodie of Brodie used it, and Kinnaird of Culbin and others. After Auldearn fight Montrose circled it for three days, but found it too strong to be taken without breaching, and as he had no heavy pieces he marched us away without attacking it. Our Margaret was in it now, and we had to face what Montrose had drawn back from.

"As I see it," said Iseabal, "this thing has to be done with cunning, if it is to be done at all."

"Ay surely!" agreed Ranald Ban. "And

in that game two are enough and three often too many. Tadg Mor and myself—"

"Is Margaret in dungeon?" I put the shipmaster.

"Na, na! Brodie is human. I went across to Spynie the day after she was taken, but Brodie wouldna let me see her. He said it could only be a hurt to both of us. That's the kind he is. But when I was coming away she heard my voice lifted, and my brave one waved a cloth out of a barred window—the topmost turret window in the nor' west corner of David's tower."

"You know the inside of the tower?"

"As well's my hand. Many the barrel of French wine I landed there for auld Bishop Guthrie."

"We will talk of this again," said I. "The tower is garrisoned?"

"Thirty or more with Brodie and Kinnaird."

I went deep into thought then, but I drew nothing out of the deeps. We had to do something, but I could not see how any force of cunning could avail against dumb walls and barred doors. Iseabal Rose leaned forward and touched my long chin with light fingers. Her cheeks had gone bloodless below the brown of the sun, and her eyes glowed at me dark and deep.

"You will get her, Martin," she promised me, the husky, prophetic note in her voice. "You will take your Margaret out of the midst of her enemies. I know it. I can see it. I can see you riding into camp on your tall horse and she riding pillion behind you. When do you go?"

I threw a hand behind me and my heart lifted. "There is our road, west and north, but the Covenanters are on it tonight."

"But not tomorrow."

"Not tomorrow, I pray God."

She reached a hand towards Tadg Mor. "Give me my shoe, Tadg Mor, before you twist it in two."

She rose to her feet then. "We will go back to camp now and refresh our guest. We have the night before us for planning."

She made herself one with us, and when the time came that was not forgotten for her.

CHAPTER VII

THE TOWER OF SPYNIE

WE crossed the dark-flowing stern Spey at the wide ford of Gight, the stiff press of the water up to our saddle girths. That was on Thursday evening; and there were three of us on horseback and a guide of the Gordons on foot: Alick Anderson, Tadg Mor O'Kavanagh, and myself. Ranald Ben MacKinnon had wanted to come in my place, but when I pointed out to him that someone had to stay behind to stand by Iseabal Rose, he soon agreed with me that he was the best man to do that. We had exchanged the shipmaster's tired beast for a broad-backed mare; Tadg Mor had borrowed a tall horse from Nat Gordon, and I rode my Moray saddle horse. We might need strength and speed in our horses before all was done, and Tadg Mor had to yield his liking for a pony.

The three of us had left Alford on the Wednesday evening after the battle. I need say nothing of that fight here; it was over in an hour, with the Gordons pursuing the broken Covenanters down the valley of the Don, showing no mercy because their young lord had been killed in the first onset. We rode most of the night, a distance of some forty miles, through safe and easy Gordon country to Huntly's stronghold at Bog of Gight, a mile back of Spey. We were then only a matter of ten miles from Spynie Castle.

The headstrong old earl was not at home, but his retainers received us in kindly fashion. We brought them the

"The Irishers!" he cried.

first news of the victory and of the exploits of the Gordons, but their exultation was sadly dampened by the death of their beloved young chief.

We had rested all that day and slept when we could. A mile or two beyond the river began Covenant territory, and we dare not venture close to Spynie until the half dark of the summer night was at hand. In the evening we had stored our saddle bags with enough provisions to last us for three days, and so plunged across the ford on our very doubtful and dangerous venture. A tall young Gordoner answering to the name of Dod Myron, with the sandy Gordon pow and the limber legs of the bog-trotter, offered to guide us a safe way to the vicinity of Spynie Loch, and his offer we accepted. He splashed across the ford up to his waist, holding Tadg Mor's stirrup leather, an old targe slapping on his back and an unfleshed basket-hilt sword under his oxter. "For," said he, "I wouldna mind cutting a couple o' Covenant throats to help the young laird rest easy."

At the other side of the ford we sent Alick Anderson roundabout homeward. He did not want to go, but we told him bluntly that a man of his years would be more of a hindrance than a help.

I rode with him some short distance up the river bank and, before we said farewell, got him again to go over every detail he could remember of the interior of Spynie Tower, checking him on a plan I had made on a sheet of paper I had borrowed off Master Wishart the chaplain. But though I had made that plan most painstakingly, I had no dimmest notion of any way of putting it to use.

"Listen now!" I said at the end. "In two days time, not sooner, you will come boldly to Spynie and ask for Margaret. If she is not there you will hear about it. But if she is, you will go home and come again later. In that way you will know if luck is with us or against us. And listen! if we are lucky, Margaret must come with us—to her old life—whether she likes to or not."

"I see that," he agreed sadly.

"When do you sail?"

"I will be ready the last week of October."

"Then, by that time, if God is good, we will find a road to Lochloy for her. You will wait as long as you can."

"I will wait." He looked me in the eye and then at his saddle bow. "I'm by the way of being a fair judge o' women, old or young," said he, "and I am thinking there is a man in your army my lassie is over fond of." He looked up quickly then.

"That could be," I agreed, "and the man might not be far from here." I gestured head downstream.

His eyebrows lifted in some surprise. "She is safe in his hands?"

"He is the finest man in all the world," I told him.

"Good!" he exclaimed deeply. "Is it not grand when men trust each other!"

We gripped hands and parted.

WEST of Spey, and north of low hills, the land rises in a slow ridge of woodland, and then drops by small terraces to a flat and cultivated country all the way to Elgin and Spynie. We had marched that way more than once. But our Gordonach did not strike over the ridge; at the reiver's jog trot he led away northwards on the edge of it inside the trees, and so down into a rushy hollow and up again, and along the margin of other wooded slopes. After an hour's steady going we crossed a cartroad that led, he told us, to a fishing port at mouth of Spey; and from that point we mounted a long sandy hill and came round the shoulder of it to look out on the sea—the same northern firth that we had looked on from Auldearn and Lochloy.

It was a clear evening in the heart of summer, and in that northern clime dawn and day and gloaming spaced twenty hours of the twenty-four. An hour before midnight one might read ordinary print. Tadg Mor, I mind, cursed the summer and the sun and the cloudless sky, for, as he said, anything we might do must be done in the few brief hours of the half darkness.

"We are safe enough this side of the loch," our guide told us, "but at the other side the Elgin fat-bellies go down to the sea links summer evenings to play a foolish game they call gowf—hitting a bit ball of feathers with an iron-bossed shinty stick."

"Shinty! That is no foolish game," denied Tadg Mor. "I have seen the Gordons play it."

"Na, na! Not shinty. There is no one playing the ball against them. They just clout the ball along the ground and clout it again and into a wee bit hole in the grass, and they swear by their Maker when they miss their putt—and count a hunderd or twa."

"Any game that makes a man swear is not a bad game," said Tadg Mor weightily.

"It is a good game then," said the Gordonach, "for they swear most awful."

Another hour's riding between the dunes brought us to the sedgy margin of the loch of Spynie. Once it had been a sea loch with ships sailing into it, but the blowing sands of all that shifting coast had gradually silted up the sea channel, and it was now only a brackish expanse of shallow water, into which the sea flowed at the very top of spring tides. Along our side of the loch, a matter of three miles, was a marshy desolation, but the marsh had a sandy foundation and the horses did not bog down in it. Dod Myron went splashing ahead of us through shallow pools without heeding where he put his feet, and we followed securely.

"How near do you want to get to Davy's tower?" he asked us after awhile.

"To put a hand on it in the dark," Tadg Mor told him, "but now we'll be doing with a look at it as near as we can get without getting a hand put on us. We must not been seen."

The Gordonach thought for a while.

"I know the place," he said then.

He led along the eastern shore where the reeds were so tall that even from horseback we could not be seen over them, and in time came to a good-sized stream flowing into a corner of the loch. There the horses drank of the fresh water. We splashed across, knee deep, and at the other side our guide warned us to dismount and move cannily. We had circled to the south side of the loch now, and slipped along westwards until we came to a sand-beached small curve of bay; and there, a cable length off shore, a bluff of islet stood tall out of

the water. It had a grassy slope above crumbling sandstone, and a hazel copse clad the sides of it.

"There it is for you," pointed Dod Myron. "No one comes anigh it except flintlock fowlers in the harvest time and winter for a shot at the ducks and wild swans."

Without hestitating he waded into the loch, and, leading our horses, we followed. The water was limpid clear, still with that soft blue tint, and we could see the yellow sand at the bottom shimmering with sun ripples. It was nowhere more than thigh deep. On the outer side of the island facing the loch was a small wedge of grass cutting into the sandstone bluff, and, at the head of the wedge, an ancient ruined anchorite cell with a sloping door having one great slab for lintel.

"Made for us, my darling lad," commented Tadg Mor.

"Ay, but come away up and let me show you," urged our guide.

We tied our unwilling horses to a hazel, and clambered up through the hazels. Our fine lad of the Gordons was already at the summit, lying flat on the grass, his head carefully lifted between two bosses of stone. We followed his example.

"There is Davy's tower for you now," he whispered. "The walls of it are nine feet thick."

THERE was David's Tower, indeed, not more than half a mile distant, plain in view over the tall reeds fringing the shore: a tall rectangular pile of masonry on a slight elevation above the water, with the ruins of the old palace buildings below and above it.

Near at hand were the half burned buildings of a farm. Colkitto had done that burning after Auldearn.

In front of the tower, facing south, was a walled kitchen garden, with tall trees beyond, and, still southwards, farm land and scattered steadings all the way towards Elgin. We could not see Elgin for a low ridge between, but the castle of it stood up on Lady Hill, and to the left we could see the ruined roof and main tower of the great cathedral, that lovely lanthorn of the north so foolishly ill-used by the Reformers.

We were looking direct at the eastern face of the tower, in which was the main entrance with its portcullis pent, and were near enough to make out the narrow defensive slits at each side of the gate. I counted four windows, one above the other, up to the battlemented roof. No one moved about the tower or in its vicinity, but there were masons at work among the farm buildings, repairing the damage we had done seven weeks before—idle work at that, for Lewis Gordon was to come raiding in October and burn the steading once again.

"It is strong, surely, and hard to come at," murmured Tadg Mor, more to himself than to me.

"Along by the reed beds and below that ruined wall," I pointed out.

"With whatever night is in it to cover us."

We slid down then to the grassy hollow, unsaddled our horses, and pegged them out to graze; and thereafter the three of us sat against the ruined wall of the cell and shared food: bannocks and oatcakes and cold meat, with a mouthful out of a flask.

"We owe you our thanks," I told Dod Myron, munching away companionably, "and if we get the chance we will not forget your fine guiding. We know our road now, and it might be well for you to make your way back to Gight."

"I dinna ken what ploy ye have in mind," said the Gordonach, "but if it is against a Brodie or a Grant I'm with ye."

"It is against Brodie of Brodie his own self," Tadg Mor enlightened him. "He holds a friend of ours yonder that we must deliver by hook or by crook."

"It canna be done," said the other firmly, "and the tower held."

"We will be making a sort of middling good wallop at it anyway," said Tadg Mor cheerfully.

"Ye will do that, I ken, for the world knows Coll's men and the chances they take. But man, man! The portcullis is aye down in dangerous times and only one bit of a postern door at the far side."

"Men walk in and out of that bit of a door, and could not we be taking a stroll in ourselves in a friendly way?"

The Gordonach laughed. "Myself would like to see how ye do it. If ye dinna mind I will hang round a while. I could keep an eye on the horses and hold them ready in case of a sudden push; there would be no fear for myself with the bullrushes handy, and look at the story I might be having to tell in after days."

"If there is a story in it—or an after day."

He was a sound youth and so very keen to stay that we did not gainsay him.

It was as dark as it would be any time that night when Tadg Mor and I slipped along the shore towards the tower, but, indeed there was no depth of darkness to hide us. The sky was clear and full of stars, and the floor of the loch was a wan, dimly luminous floor of silver. Our hope was that no pickets were night-posted outside the tower. We moved very slowly and circumspectly on the margin of the reeds, crouching along head down, and lying flat every minute to listen. We had seen shepherd dogs among the farm buildings, and one of them, on a night hunt, might easily raise an alarm, more especially if the news of Alford had reached Spynie. But the night remained still. We could hear our hearts beat, and ever and again, as a breath of air shivered in the reeds, they whispered a small lonely aware whisper to themselves only.

So we came safely to the northern face of the tower, and lay flat on a dark patch of grass above the beach. We looked at the tall bulk of the wall on the head of the slope above us. There were eight windows in pairs of four on this side, and the bottom one on the left, ten feet off the ground, showed a dim red glow. I knew from my plan of the building that behind that window was the main guard; and I visioned it as the shipmaster had described it to me: a big room with a stone floor, a wide hearth for burning peats, and an arched roof; there was a double stair leading to a gallery and the upper floors, and in the far corner near the main door was the well of the spiral stairs leading to the portcullis pent and the turret room. From that turret room Margaret had waved to her uncle, and we had to get at it somehow.

Our eyes went up the wall to that top-most turret window on the northwest corner, and my hear gave a stir when I saw that it was lit—dimly lit, as by a taper, but still lit.

"She is there," whispered Tadg Mor.

"Someone is there," I whispered back.

But I knew it was Margaret. I felt her near me. I could call out her name, and her clear voice would answer me. But instead of doing that folly I crawled up the slope and came to my feet by the wall. Tadg Mor was at my heels.

Close under the heavily barred windows we made the full circle of the tower. As we knew, there were only the main entrance on the east side and a narrow postern door on the west. On that west side, some distance from the tower, were the ruined or half-ruined buildings of the old palace, mostly low structures full of small chambers. We slipped across there into a broken doorway where nettles grew, and out of the dark took a long look at the postern door directly across from us. There was the black square of a shuttered grill high up on the face of it.

"If we walked across and knocked,"

whispered Tadg Mor hopefully, "who knows but they might open to us, and if they did we could put enough sudden fright in them to give us time to make the turret and back again."

"They would not open without looking through the grill, and it is not they would be frightened then."

"We will not disturb them so. What are we to do now?"

"Nothing more tonight. Tomorrow we may be able to find out how strongly the tower is held."

"The three of us—"

"Three?"

"The Myron lad has the clear fighting eye. I could pistol two and dagger one and cut down a couple more." He paused, and then, "Do you want to go on with it, Maurteen?"

"Fear or no fear, I will be inside that door tomorrow night."

"Man! is that strange sure feeling on you again." He patted my shoulder softly. "The thing is as good as done then. Let us away back to our den and be taking a sleep to ourselves, in the name o' God."

And we went back to our little island as carefully as we had come.

I SLEPT well that night and had no dreams under Iseabal Rose's plaid. It was cold feet wakened me for good in full daylight. Iseabal Rose's plaid was on the short side, and I often cursed it for that.

Friday was a long day, but it passed. While one or the other of us kept a steady watch on the tower the other two had nothing to do but lie about on the grass and talk. Once I found Tadg Mor and Dod Myron at long jumps, with the Gordonach having the better of it, and I tried a jump myself and beat them both, thereby rising in the lad's estimation; up to that I suspected he did not think much of my qualities for the dangerous business in hand. I think I have said before now that I had no great bodily strength, but I should say also that I was reasonably fast and of good endurance. It might be the Indian strain in me, but I do not remember any time that I was leg weary—not at Inverlochy, nor at Dundee in that terrible night retreat, nor in any of the stupendous marches in the welter of the Grampians. I was just built that way for toughness.

After the midday meal we risked sending Dod round about into Elgin to pick up any news that might be. I hesitated to do it, for I was afraid that his half-Gaelic Gordon twang might get him into trouble, but he eagerly insisted that a plain country lad without arms was in no danger whatever. He brought back word that Brodie of Brodie and Kinnaird of Culbin were holding Spynie with about two score men. There was dismay in the town at the news of Alford, and there was talk of an early meeting of all the Moray lairds at Darnaway Castle near Forres to prepare a defence of the Laich against the Gordons, who would be sure to make a fresh raid now that Baillie was out of the way.

"Two score men!" said Tadg Mor looking at me. "Are you sure of yourself now, Maurteen."

"I was sure last night."

Some time in the afternoon Tadg Mor was above on watch, and I was idly questioning Dod Myron on the manner of life that the Gordons followed in Gight and Strathbogie, when Tadg Mor whistled down to us. We scrambled up to his side.

"There is a stir on," he whispered in some excitement.

There surely was. Saddled horses, two or more to each horseboy, were being brought round to the front of the castle; the portcullis was up and the big door open; and men in half armor moved in and about the arch. We had not long to wait to find out what was toward. In less than ten minutes a strong body of

horse moved away from the tower on the Elgin road. We were too far away to make sure, but we agreed that there were not less than thirty men in that company, and there was no woman amongst them.

"Tonight!" whispered Tadg Mor, a gleam in the eyes that met mine.

And I nodded my head, for I could not trust my voice to hide the tell-tale beating of my heart.

The horsemen did not go up to Elgin. Where the road forked they swung away westwards at the round trot.

"The Forres Road," Dod told us. "They are off to their meeting—and well guarded."

"To return when—tonight?" Doubt was all alive in me.

"Darnaway and back is thirty miles. They will be late whatever."

"And too late," Tadg Mor was sanguine now beyond reason. "Tell me, Dod avic, did you ever blood that fine sword?"

"Give me the chance," said Dod eagerly. "I'll no' be a man till I do."

THAT night, at the first dark, the three of us crouched inside the ruined doorway and looked across at the postern door. We were fully armed for the venture, except that Tadg Mor, for ease of movement in narrow places, carried no shield. The leather coat, purchased for a stolen keg of beer at Aberdeen, had long ago been cut short at the hips and would turn a sword cut. I had loaned Dod Myron one of my pistols.

Our plan was a simple one but very desperate. Dod Myron, the plain country lad, was to walk across to the postern, lay down sword and shield by the wall, and knock boldly. The warder would, without doubt, come to look through the grill; and Dod, a man from Rothes on the edge of the Covenant country, would have an important message for my lord Brodie. Anything might happen then: the door open, or the warder grow suspicious of the caught Gordon twang; or he might insist that the message be given through the grill, or might even call up the guard. It was a dicer's throw. But if the door did open, Dod was to put his foot in it and we were to drive across. And then? Then our swords and luck.

But at the very last minute something happened that made us change our plan. Dod Myron was in the act of getting sword loose before slipping across the yard when he heard the snick of the grill being lifted, and then, after a pause, the door opened and a man took the single step to the ground.

The man came directly across the yard, and took one stride to pass our door. He did not take a second. For Tadg Mor's long arm, like the circling lash of a whip, swept him inside; and a hand, struck hard over his mouth, strangled the squeal of terror and surprise. His feet kicked amongst the nettles, his hands clawed, and suddenly he stilled. The whole thing had happened more quickly than the telling.

"There is a dirk at your heart." That hissed whisper would still any man.

Tadg Mor held his prisoner from behind, one hand over his mouth and the dagger point below the breast bone. The hand over his mouth slipped throatwards, and the man, looking down, saw in the dimness the gleam of the steel. He was very still.

"Question him, Maurteen," whispered Tadg Mor, "and if he lifts his voice his soul will leap out after it."

"The Irishers!" the man whispered.

I leaned close, my mind at stretch.

"How many hold the tower tonight?"

He was silent, gathering his wits.

"The truth! How many? Quick!"

"Six—eight—no more."

"Where are they?"

"In the muckle room—a meenit ago."

"Is Brodie there?"

"Him and Kinnaird are away."

"Are they coming back here tonight?"

"How would I ken? Sometimes they stay."

"Are there any prisoners in the tower?"

"A woman in the turret room."

"Who opened the door to let you out?"

"The warder."

"He keeps all the keys?"

"A bunch at his girdle."

"Good man yourself, Maurteen!" whispered Tadg Mor.

"H-s-sh! Who are you?"

"Tam Murdoch, the builder."

"Why were you in the tower?"

"Having a drink to himself—I can smell it," said Tadg Mor, and Dod Myron chuckled softly.

"You can get in again, Tam Murdoch?" I went on.

"I have no business."

"You will have." My mind was working smooth and fast. "Listen! You will go back to the door and you will knock at it, and when the warder comes you will tell him that you have an important thing to say to the steward about the roofing timbers. Do you hear me?"

"I canna—They would hang me the morn."

"The man that opens to you will hang no one." That was Tadg Mor.

"I'll do it," he said and drew in his breath.

It came about that easy. But we had to move fast now.

"You take him, Tadg Mor," I began, but Tadg stopped me impatiently. In action he needed no lesson.

"I know, I know! Come, mason! You need fear no one but me."

IT touched some mad sense of laughter in me to see Tadg Mor crouch behind his victim. The man was short and slender, and Tadg Mor could never hope to hide his own big shoulders. Dod Myron and I crouched inside the doorway like men set for a race, swords drawn.

"We did that well," he whispered to me, making himself one of the trinity.

Tadg Mor set his man on the step of the door, and straightened up flat by the side of it, his head back and turned sideways, a pointed pistol in one hand and his dirk in the other. There was enough light to see the steel dim-gleaming.

The man Murdoch knocked on the door, at first timidly, and then despairingly loud as Tadg Mor gestured at him.

The door opened, after what seemed a startlingly short time. It looked a miracle to me. First the grill lifted and a growl came through; and then before Murdoch could raise his voice a chain clanged and the door was flung wide.

"You dom ninny, Tam! What did ye forget this time—?"

That half-angry warder got no further. The builder got back a spark of spirit.

"The Irishers, Will!" he cried, and made the essay to bolt like a rabbit head-down between the warder's legs.

But Tadg Mor was quicker. He pivoted himself round the jamb, hurled the builder aside with a thrust of the hip and struck and grappled the warder, all in one shattering motion.

The Gordon lad and I leaped across the yard and reached the door shoulder to shoulder. What happened to the mason I do not know, for we neither saw him nor heeded him. Tadg Mor was already easing the warder's body to the floor. It was a dead body, I fear.

The whole thing had taken place with very little noise—the yelp of the mason and the thud of a blow, no more—and the only noise now was the clinking of keys at the fallen man's belt as Tadg Mor fumbled at them. I forced my body into the passage beyond Tadg Mor and he straightened up behind me, the keys clinking as he thrust the bunch inside his belt.

"Quick now, brother!" he whispered.

I looked into blackness down that long passage, and, far away, close to the

floor, saw a chink of light. There was the door of the main guard. I gripped my sword under my oxter, put a hand out before me, fixed my eyes on that chink of light, and went forward on tiptoe over an uneven flagged floor. Tadg Mor's grasp was in my belt, and Dod Myron came linked behind. In time my fingers touched the wood of that final door, and groped softly over it until they found the latch. They found it on the wrong side, I thought. I levered up the latch noiselessly and pressed, but the door held firm as a rock.

"Locked!"

But Tadg Mor's hand came over my shoulder, found my wrist and tugged gently; and the door came with his tug.

"Well now!" I whispered, and took three long soft strides out into the main guard.

I tried to take everything in at one glance. I stood halfway up the long room, and it was much as I had visualised it: a great stone hall with a table running down the middle, a huge fireplace at the top end, and the double stairs going up at either side of it.

A group of men—six or eight, I do not remember—sat about the fire on benches or hassocks. They were not in armor or armed, and their hoseless feet were set comfortably in the warm ashes.

We stood there and looked at them, and there was a tight, unreal feeling all about us. We could have strode ten paces and cut down three men like sheep. And then a guard turned his head. He might have felt our eyes on him, or even such a small thing as the draught from the door. He stared at us a moment, and then started to his feet.

"The Hielands!" he cried.

Then we were down on them. They were no trouble to us at all. They would see three men in line, could imagine other men crowding at the door; they would see the terrible points withdrawn for the thrust, the brown shields with bosses and studs gleaming, and eyes white with the lust of death. They bleated and scattered like sheep. A bench fell, and one man in the scurry fell backwards into the red coals. As that man roared and rolled and leaped to his feet the Gordonach blooded his sword yelling with all his might: "For the young laird!"

TADG MOR and I did not draw any blood. We were not bloody-minded men. The guards, all of one instinct, bundled towards a door at the end of the fireplace below the stair, and thrust themselves through in one close press. Tadg Mor leaped behind and brought the flat of his sword on their crouched shoulders; I thrust one man through with the boss of my targe; and then the door crashed shut in our faces. But they were in such a hurry that a hand of one of them was caught and crushed in the jamb; and Tadg Mor, with a sudden mighty thrust of shoulder, drove the door an inch, and the hand disappeared.

"Obliging fellows!" he shouted, his fingers feeling round the keyhole. He was a locksmith by trade and got the right key at the second trial.

"If there's another way out," said he, "who will be looking for it?"

The man that the Gordonach had pierced was kicking his heels on the flags, and I knew what that kicking meant.

We wasted no time. I picked up the crusie light, and ran down the length of the hall, shading the flame behind my targe. The door to the turret stairs was in the right corner by the main entrance. It was shut but not locked.

"Let me first, Maurteen," said Tadg Mor at my shoulder. "I have the keys."

He took the lamp from me and we started upwards. There were four or five stories in David's Tower, and the stone spiral was a long one, but I had plenty wind left at the top. There were

narrow light slits in the outer curve, but no door above the portcullis pent until we came to one in an alcove below the last spiral.

"Is this the place?" Tadg Mor whispered up over his shoulder.

"I think—it should be."

He found the right key very quickly, turned it with the faintest click, and his lamp shone across a room that had been dark a second ago.

There was an open barred window in the far wall and a pallet couch along one side. The silence held for still a moment, and then the coverings stirred on the couch and a voice came out of the stir.

"Wha is't?"

That was our own Margaret, and she had been asleep. It was only natural that she should be asleep, and the hour near midnight, but all the same I was mightily surprised at her.

So was Tadg Mor. He stepped inside the room and held the candle above his head.

"She would sleep through God's thunder," said he.

At that she sat bolt upright and her eyes stared wildly at us. Her face was paler than its wont, but the good bones below it were firm as ever; her linten hair was in two plaits over her breast as I had so often seen it; the lovely curve of her throat and the smooth of her shoulders were whiter than curd; and as she looked at us the old soft lustre deepened and deepened in her gray eyes.

"My ain loons!" said she softly. "My very ain loons! Ye would come—ye aye came!"

And there her face crinkled as a child's will, and her head turned from us and sank to her knees. It was the first time I had seen her weep. It was the last too.

Tadg Mor strode across the narrow floor and, of instinct, her shoulder swerved from his hand. She always hated to be touched, and showed it.

"Girl!" he whispered urgently. "On with your clothes, quick!"

She shook her head to clear her eyes.

"Ye've the tower taken?"

"Or it us."

I was at her side now, with a firm hold of her wrist. And she looked up at me with swimming eyes.

"There are only the three of us—"

"Three! Did ye kill them all?"

"No. The others may be back any minute. Come on, my dear!" And I tugged at her wrist.

She smiled up at me cooler than I was, and brought her other hand down on mine. "Easy, laddie, easy! Would ye shame me? Turn your backs a meenit and I'll no' keep ye."

We turned and Tadg Mor put down the candle on a small table at mid floor that already held a black-wicked tallow dip in a sconce. Dod Myron stood inside the door, his stained sword lax in his grip, and his astounded eyes on Margaret.

"Your manners, hero!" said Tadg Mor, and swung him round by the shoulder.

And the Gordonach looked back at him, blinking. "A woman! Did we do all that for a woman—and she out of Aberdeen, by her tongue."

"You missed your schoolin', Dod boy," reproved Tadg Mor. "Did you never hear of Grecian Helen, or Deirdre of Glendaruel, or Izod of Dublin?"

"And Mary of Scotland as well—but Aberdeen, at our ain doors?"

"Far away cows have long horns. Hurry, Meg darling!"

She did hurry. I had known her to spend an hour at her preening, but this time her toilet did not take three minutes.

She might have taken twenty, for all the good her hurry did.

(to be continued)

Suddenly his arm shot out and up.

NINE SECONDS

By B. L. Jacot

AN IRON bedstead standing on end jammed the doorway of the *tienda.* Rifle fire had splintered the shop-front and pock-marked the cement of the white Spanish walls. The fall of the town had given the International Brigade more prisoners than the jails could hold: there were eight men cooped in the shop.

With his back turned to the Italians on guard outside, a tall Basque was turning something over in his strong hands.

Ragged prisoners crowded around the tall Basque.

"They can only shoot us once," someone breathed.

"Once is enough for most people. But, listen! It is a bare chance. You will leave the talking to me. You understand?"

"They are looking for the railwaymen," a voice reminded.

"Let them look. They know nothing." The tall man's eye, passing from face to face, turned off to a slim figure slumped on the end of a bench. This boy had come into this ragged group of prisoners in the gray light before dawn. No one knew where he had come from. He looked not more than sixteen.

"Rouse thyself, *mon vieux.*" The clipped accent of the Basque French the older man spoke softened. "It is not so bad. Providence has sent us something. We have just found an old kepi under the boards here. *Regardez!*"

He pulled on the cap.

The man in the cap turned boldly now to stare out once more through the wire mesh of the bedstead. Across the cobbled square the railway sheds quivered in a heat haze. The steeple of the *casa consistorial* ended abruptly halfway up and a litter of masonry lay in the street.

For months the town had held out against the advance, braced against pressure by the network of railways behind it. But once the resistance began to crack it melted magically away like snow.

It had fallen in the early hours of that morning, and all the International Brigade had found inside the fortifications were empty suburbs. In the centre of the town cheering civilians greeted them as deliverers, waving the flags laid by for the purpose, while the smoke from thousands of stoves burning hastily discarded uniforms still rose in the air.

This sort of reception was no novelty in a Spain torn by civil war. The International Brigade knew how to handle the situation. All that morning the men penned in the shop had been listening to the execution squads at work reducing the pressure on the jails. Every twenty minutes a sharp burst of rifle fire from the barracks at the back. They had no means of telling the time, yet at intervals an expectant hush would come on the huddled group as they waited for the whip-crack volley.

That hush fell now and the tall man turned back quietly from the door to watch the boy. He was taking it badly, shutting his ears against the sound of the volley when it came. The older man was moving over to him when steps halted on the other side of the bedstead, and they began to pry away the obstruction.

THE escort marched them across the sun-drenched square to a long room in the barracks, lining them up against a table where a mixed group of officers sat. A young man with a duelling scar on his face looked up, flicking the ash from his cigarette.

"You were taken in a room at the post office. No resistance," he said, speaking Spanish with a strong German accent. "Is that correct?"

The tall man stepped forward.

"Correct," he said in French. "But, *mon colonel—*"

"French, eh?" A bearded captain interrupted him in Anglicised French. "Well, say what you've got to say, and make it short."

"I am Sergeant Hirogoyen of the International Brigade," the tall Basque told him. "These men are the remains of my section captured in March at Villaruttia, and for four months we have been held as hostages in—"

"We haven't believed anyone who has tried that tale yet. What armored train were you with?"

"Train? We are not railwaymen."

The Basque moistened his lips and waited. There was a gray look on the faces of these men, the cruel tension of those who asked and gave no mercy. The International Brigade was after the railwaymen—those civilian crews of improvised armored trains steaming in and out of the junction, inflicting heavy losses and disappearing. The man who called himself Sergeant Hirogoyen was thinking of the boy as he watched those faces.

"Where did you steal that *kepi*?"

"It was issued to me. Between us we kept it hidden to prove our identity when our troops arrived."

"It proves nothing." The captain held out his hand for the cap. "*Diez y siete,*" he said. "Seventeen. So that was your unit, eh? Who was your lieutenant, and what was your section?"

"Bombing section, *mon capitaine.* With the lieutenant Vaisseau. He was killed." He fixed his eyes on the bright patches of sunlight under the tall win-

dows, his heart pumping painfully as he waited for the sound he dreaded—a voice joining in, in native French. From all parts of the world came this brigade of men fighting for the thrill of fighting in Spain. Voices muttered among that grim group behind the table, but no sound of French reached his straining ear.

"Well, what were you doing in the post office building?"

"The first thing we knew of the advance," he explained quickly, "was when they came to unlock the cells at the Montevegras jail. I found and collected these seven men of my section and took them to the post office."

"Why?"

He thought quickly. "A strong building, *mon capitaine*. We had no arms, but if they had tried to retake us with our own men on the way—"

"All your men French?"

"*Oui!* We are Basques, from Mauche."

"And you can tell us nothing of the railways? Of this organization behind the armored trains?"

"But nothing! As hostages in jail we saw nothing and heard little." He kept his voice level, but he was thinking that with this batch of prisoners the interval would be longer than twenty minutes. No bullets would whine about the collapsing bodies of the men at his back.

The German colonel cleared his throat, stubbing out his cigarette.

"I congratulate you," he said.

The tall Basque came sharply to attention. "Thank you, *mon colonel*."

"On your story. It is the best we have heard. And now I will tell you what you were doing at the Post Office. You were captured in a room next to the telegraph room. Up to the last minute messages were going out by wireless from the town—to the headquarters of your railway artillery. You are all going to be shot. Have you anything to add?"

The guard closed up to the group.

"We are not railwaymen," the tall man repeated. "We know nothing of telegraphs and wireless. You are making a mistake."

"We are taking a chance on that," the German said, then, changing from his Teutonic French, he snapped at the guards: "Take them away."

HIROGOYEN swung round to rejoin the group. He avoided their eyes, moved by a feeling that he had let them down.

"*Allez!* March!" ordered the sergeant of the guard and they began to move.

"Just a moment!" It was the Englishman who spoke. "I've just thought of something. There's a certain test of whether they're speaking the truth."

The German shouted an order and the group stopped at the door. The Englishman rose and spoke for a while to him over his shoulder, showing him the watch he held in his palm. At length the German snapped out a further command and the little group lined up once more before the table.

As Hirogoyen faced the bearded Englishman he keyed himself up desperately to keep his senses to a hair-trigger alertness.

"The hand grenades we use in the brigade," the Englishman began, "are German—Heinzel-Krauss. If you are a bombing sergeant you will know them like you know the back of your hand. And you will know your detonation period as well as I do. I am going to test you with the test all non-commissioned officers pass before they get their stripes. You are going to judge against this stopwatch I have here the nine seconds between letting the pin jump and detonation. Understand?"

Hirogoyen moistened his lips. "Perfectly."

"You are allowed two-tenths of a second margin in your promotion test. You will be allowed that two-tenths now."

"Get on with the business," the German growled. "We're wasting time."

"When you are ready, make the motion of tossing a grenade. I'll start the watch on that toss. I'll stop it when you shout. Guess right and I'll be glad to have you in my battalion. Guess wrong and you'll go where you deserve to go. Everything clear?"

"You have a new sergeant, *mon capitaine,*" the Basque grinned. In the faces of his companions he read that hope was dead. That grin did not deceive them. Hope was dead now in Hirogoyen as well. How could you count nine seconds to a tenth of a second? He knew it was impossible—out of the question for a man, like himself, who had never handled a grenade.

As he poised himself to go through with the business of tossing a bomb, his eyes turned out of the long windows towards France, the blue streak of the mountains he would never cross again. The seconds dragged as he lingered on that distant horizon, clear-cut in the slant of the afternoon sun. Someone—the boy, he thought—moved tensely behind him as they waited. Then, suddenly, his arm shot out and up. The click of the stop-watch cut like a knife into the silence.

The breathless hush of concentration fell on the room. No one moved and seconds ticked on. The boy's eyes were strained bright on the shoulders of the tall man. He wanted to shout at him: "You fool! Time's up. It's past! Why don't you shout? But Hirogoyen was wrapped in a calm detachment as he stared out motionless across the hills.

Ten seconds. Fifteen. Half a minute. The conviction grew to certainty among the little group that something had gone wrong. A whole minute must have passed. More than that. Then: *Poomf!* came an echoing shout. There was a sure ring about it that met with confirmation in the English officer's face.

"They're all right, I reckon!" he said at length and showed the watch to the presiding German. "Only a man trained to our Heinzels could have got his period right to a tenth of a second."

For a moment the German ran his eyes over the ragged figures before him. "Go and get uniforms and report to the bombing officer when you're cleaned up. Send in the next lot."

IT WAS late that night when Hirogoyen walked back from the kitchens with an arm on the boy's shoulder.

"Get back to France," he advised. "The frontier is only thirty kilometers to the North. You have had enough of war."

"And if I stick with you?"

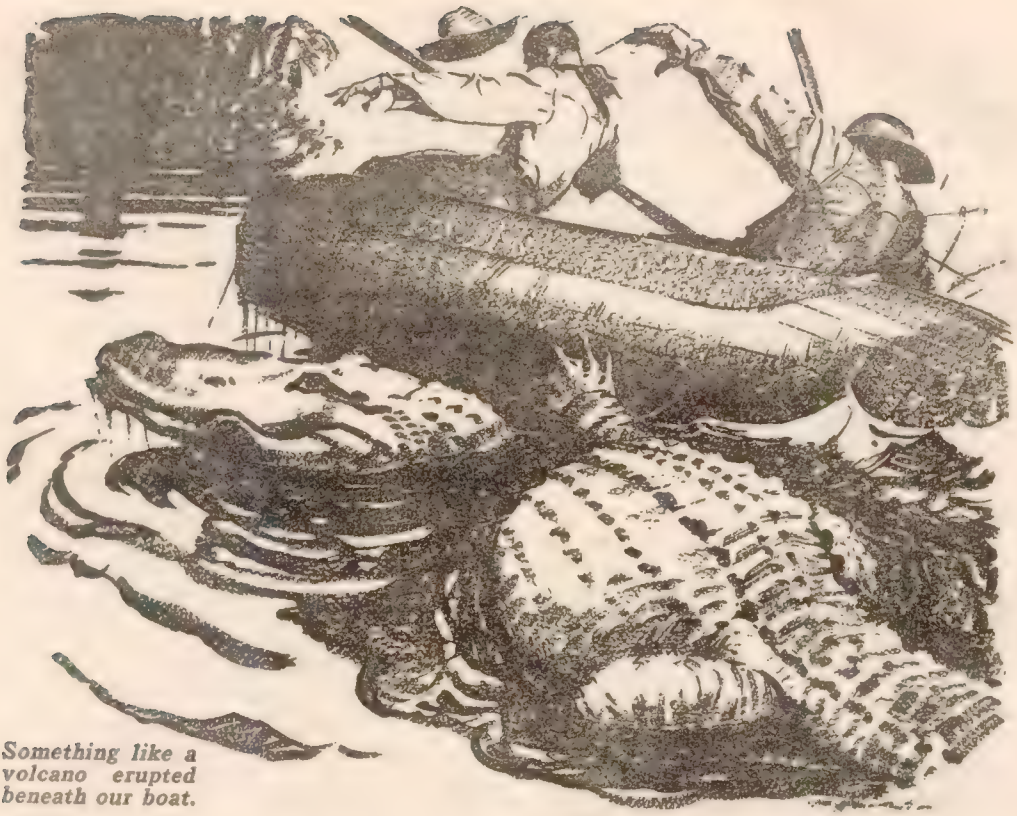
"These people have only captured the town. Just beyond we should be in our own territory again, and that's where we're heading tonight."

"I'm coming with you," the boy decided. "I didn't know you had been a bombing sergeant."

The tall man, equipped now in the uniform of the international brigade, looked carefully both ways before speaking.

"I've never thrown a bomb in my life," he confided. "I was an engine driver for ten years before this war, and since then I have been with the armored trains.

"While I was staring out of the windows, thinking it was all up with us, I saw in the distance one of our trains. There is a viaduct up in those hills that you have to cross at an even speed of thirty kilos an hour because of the structure. I saw a plume of smoke approaching the viaduct." He laughed. "I know these railways like the back of my hand. Not bombs. We time our trains over that viaduct to see that we are running right. It takes nine seconds to cross. So I waited till the train got on the bridge, and shouted as it came off."



Something like a volcano erupted beneath our boat.

ALLIGATORS CAN BITE

A fact story by Tracy Richardson

IN 1910, when the rebel army was making a night crossing of the Tipa Tapa river, on their advance against Granada, the second city of Nicaragua, a river stampede cost the lives of scores of horses and an unknown number of men. The crossing was well under way, and part of us were already on the far side, when a wild scream rang out, the scream of a horse in great pain or fright.

Horses thrashed in the water, men cursed, and then hell broke loose. I'll never forget the screaming of the poor horses and the cries of men, injured and crying for help, where no help was possible.

Morning brought order out of the confusion, but lining the banks of the river were the bodies of horses and men. Many more must have been carried down through the rapids into Lake Nicaragua.

"What," I demanded of Colonel Thomas, our interpreter, "caused the stampede last night? What killed the horses and men?"

"Alligators," he replied bluntly. "They attacked one of the horses, and fright did the rest."

I was just a kid at the time, on my first campaign, green to the ways of the tropics, and about the only thing I was good at was asking questions. And I began to ask questions about alligators. The more I asked the less sure I was where fact left off and imagination began, but I kept on asking, over a period

of years of soldiering and explorations in the tropical Americas. I was really interested in only two points—how big do they grow and how dangerous are they to human beings?

After the revolution was over I met a Dane in Managua, Otto Lund, a professional alligator hunter. I checked his books for a one-year period and it showed that he had taken fourteen thousand alligators out of Lake Managua in that time, at an average net profit of one dollar per skin. That's over a thousand alligators a month, and he only killed the small ones, taking nothing over six feet in length. The larger skins did not have commercial value.

He used a flat-bottomed scow for hunting—or rather several of them, for he kept six crews busy. They hunted at night, shining the alligators' eyes with a jacklight, shooting them in the head with a fifty-three calibered rifle. This huge slug, he told me, stopped them better than any bullet he knew. As soon as an animal was shot they gaffed it and hauled it aboard the scow, where it was skinned and the body thrown back into the water to attract more victims. It took experience to do this work, for when an alligator is shot, it sinks like a stone. It will float in a few hours, but by that time the skin may be ruined.

Later Lund started an oil extraction plant and saved the carcasses for their oil. The oil was sold to the owners of the cocoa plantations, who used it to kill the ants that destroyed their trees.

Lund told me that in the ten years he had been an hunter, over most of Central and South America, he had never had one of his men bitten by an alligator, although in a few cases they had sustained injuries by being hit by the tail of a wounded animal. He had heard many tales of man-eating alligators, but never knew of an authentic case.

As he explained it, alligators in their natural environment do not as a rule eat fresh meat, but bury it in the mud of the river or lake and wait until it is partially decayed. Their principal food is fish.

I made a trip from Lake Granada up the *Rio Frio* River into Costa Rica. No one lived on the upper reaches of the river and it was a regular alligators' heaven. At a small village on the Costa Rican border I met a native who was minus a leg.

"An alligator got it when I was a boy," he told me. He was sitting on a small platform out over the river, swinging his feet in and out of the water. All of a sudden a large alligator eased up out of the water, snapped his leg and jerked him into the river. He managed to hang onto a stringer of the platform, while the alligator hung onto his leg, and threw itself over and over in the water.

The bone already crushed by the first bite, the flesh parted and the animal swam away with the leg. The man's story was vouched for by the *alcalde* of the village, who claimed to have been present at the time of the accident.

FAR up in the jungles of Costa Rica we camped at the junction of the *Rio Frio* and *Santa Clara* rivers. In joining they formed the letter *Y*. The central part of this *Y*, to all appearances, was solid jungle. From our camp we had been watching alligators swim upstream in the early morning. It was the rutting season, and at night they floated downstream, giving vent to deep calls, like the bellowing of bulls. Before daylight they started upstream again to seek their nests for the day.

An unusually large specimen, instead of following the river, crawled into the bush, at the point of the *Y*, and disappeared. My partners and myself jumped into a dugout and went in pursuit, never having seen an alligator the size of this monster. When we arrived at the point where we thought the anim-

al had gone ashore we found that it had entered a narrow canal leading through the bush.

In we went, through the narrow passage. For fifty yards we pushed our boat through a channel just wide enough for us to get through and not over two feet deep; then we burst out from the underbrush into an open lagoon. Straight ahead of us we could see the reeds springing back into position, marking the recent passage of the giant cayman. The lagoon, about five acres in extent, was dotted with what looked like rounded grass or haystacks, but which later proved to be rat houses. The tops of these grass piles were black with countless little alligators, sunning themselves.

We pushed on after our 'gator. Without warning something like a volcano erupted beneath our boat and we rose into the air, and the next thing we knew we were struggling in the shallow water. A trail of foam marked the path of the frightened alligator, far more scared than we were, if action counted for anything, as it rushed at express train speed for safety.

We recovered our guns from the water and continued our hunt, but the alligators had disappeared as though by magic.

Three days we stalked that giant; then on the fourth day he again entered his private passageway, and we were waiting. A thirty-thirty soft nose bullet stopped it without a movement, and we hauled it ashore. Twenty-two feet two inches from the tip of its nose to the tip of its tail. With a machete we hacked off its head, which we later placed over an ant hill. After it had been thoroughly cleaned by these insects we extracted the teeth for *requerdos,* sorry that conditions did not permit us to save the hide.

This was the longest alligator I have ever seen, though Colonel Shanton, formerly of the Canal Police, told me of killing one on the Chagres river that measured twenty-two feet and six inches in length. On several occasions I have seen alligators that would have measured larger on a poundage basis.

FLORES, the capital of the Department of Peten, Guatamala, is an old Maya Indian village, built on an island in Lake Peten, also called Lago de San Andres. This lake, with no visible inlet or outlet but with a rising and falling tide, is a perfect home for alligators.

The communal slaughter house is apart from the island, built over the water on pilings. Live animals, cattle and pigs, are ferried to the killing in large dugout canoes, and are regularly convoyed by dozens of alligators, swimming in to get their share of the blood and entrails that are thrown to them.

An English doctor who has lived in Flores for many years showed me a half-wit, with a hideous scar marring his forehead and another at the base of his skull—the mark of a 'gator.

This boy and another, according to the doctor, were out on the lake, fishing from their canoe. The younger dived overboard to free his tackle. When after a minute he did not reappear the older one looked over the side and in the clear water saw the youngster struggling on the bottom of the lake, with his head held in the jaws of an alligator.

Without hesitation he drew his knife and went overboard. He slashed and gouged at the eyes of the animal and forced it to give up its victim. Seizing the youngster, he swam to the surface, pumped the water from his lungs and rushed him to the doctor. This was the boy, now grown, that the doctor produced. This doctor told me it was the only case he had ever known of an alligator attacking a man.

He bore out Otto Lund's theory. The alligator's natural food is fish; there are plenty of fish in the water. Why should

a 'gator go after a man, unnatural food, difficult to get? A dead body, perhaps, or an accidental victim, but not a live, protesting human.

This same rule, he contended, applied to wild animals. Alligators, explained the doctor, like to lie on the sand bars or along the shore, and sun themselves. Very often a pig, a dog or other small animal walking along the shore stumbles into a sleeping alligator. With an instinctive slash of its tail, the alligator's most natural and deadly weapon, the animal is knocked from its feet, probably into the water. The accidental feast is merely the next progressive step. Ordinarily, at the slightest sound of an approaching animal, an alligator will slide silently into the water.

On one occasion my partner and I were waiting in the village of Chamelecon, in Honduras, for our pack train to come in from the interior. We saw a funeral procession that marched to the wailing of women, but carried no corpse.

"It's Old Yellow Devil," they told us. "He's got another baby."

Old Yellow Devil, it seemed, was a tradition. He had lived in this part of the river longer than the longest memory of its inhabitants. Old Yellow Devil, so they claimed, ate nothing but babies, dogs and pigs, having a strong preference for babies.

All the laundry work of the village was conducted along the shores of the river. Babies playing at their mothers' sides might stumble into deep water, or they might become careless and swim out too far. There Old Yellow Devil waited. Silently as a shadow he would rise from the depths, and seldom was there ever so much as a scream to mark the passing of another victim.

We had plenty of time to kill, so we decided to end the days of this river terror. At various points along the river front we staked out pigs and dogs, for every one knew that Old Yellow Devil just couldn't resist 'em. With field glasses we watched the river, out of sight, but within good rifle shot, but nary a ripple in the water marked the presence of our proposed victim or any of his fellows. Then another baby disappeared from its mother's side at the river. Although the women folks all wailed and blamed the alligator, we were convinced it was a case of drowning. Anyway, we decided on drastic measures.

From San Pedro Sula we secured a few sticks of dynamite and an electrical detonating outfit. We packed two sticks of the explosive into a slender meat covering, attached the detonator and wires and sank it in the river. For hours we took turns sitting there with our hands on the plunger, and were almost ready to give the 'gator credit for smartness when the detonator began to slide towards the water. Without our noticing it the slack of the wires had been taken up, and there was a steady pull. Bill was on the handle at the time. He slammed the handle down and a muffled rumbling answered from the depths of the river. No water was thrown up, as would have been the case if the powder had been free.

We set out more baited dynamite, but it remained there for three days without being molested. To this day the natives will tell you that Old Yellow Devil has never come back for another baby.

While exploring the headwaters of the Bascan river in Chiapas, Mexico, army ants chased us out of camp and onto a small gravel bar in the river. An alligator, a small one about eight feet long, snapped at one of the Indians and got the seat of his shorts. I think there were reasons for that attack other than a desire for human meat. Another Indian the same night was grabbed by a small alligator. The Indian was in shallow water. He let out a roar and we rushed to his assistance. Bodily we carried both the Indian and the 'gator to

the island, where we tried to pry open the beast's jaws. I found out right there that although they claim a man of ordinary strength can hold an alligator's mouth closed, it takes something more than poles and machetes to pry his mouth open. After working in vain for ten minutes we gave it up as impossible. In desperation I placed the two-fifty close to the animal's spine and fired. The rigidity left the body at once and we were able to open the jaws with our hands. The Indian was not badly hurt. I think this attack on the part of the alligator was a matter of pure fright or perhaps self defense, as no doubt the boy walked right on top of the animal as it lay on the bottom watching our lights.

ON THE Encanto River, close to the Bascan, I killed two alligators that were the most monstrous things I have ever seen in a wild state. Not long—between fourteen and fifteen feet—but four feet wide and half that thick. They were yellow-green with age and there was a growth like moss on their backs.

Wise with the wisdom of ages, each one of them was the master of a deep pool. They were too deep for a rifle bullet and would not take bait. As I watched one of them lying there staring back at me, I could see countless small fish darting in and out of its mouth; apparently they were pulling scraps of food from its teeth. By shining a light at night I finally drew them to the surface of the water, where I shot them. Each hide made a mule load. When a downriver planter finally got their hides tanned they filled the entire sides of his living room.

The Indians were not afraid of ordinary alligators, but if they knew that one of these old specimens was around they would not go near the water unless protected by some white man's guns. They claimed such specimens were over a thousand years old, and imbued with all the wisdom of the ages.

With two white companions and several natives I made the trip down the then unexplored Patuca river, in Honduras. If we had believed the stories told by the natives, there were so many alligators in the river there was no room for water. For several months we lived on this beautiful river, hunting, prospecting and panning for gold—there was none, in paying quantities—and in all that time the largest alligator we saw was not over ten feet in length. You could find a dozen alligator nests, full of eggs, on almost any of the sandy beaches of the river. At night the beam of the hunting light would turn the waters of the river into a ruby-studded thing of beauty. Dozens and dozens of alligators' eyes reflecting back their ruby red light. The river was not deep, and if there were any large specimens we could never find where they stayed in the daytime.

I was preparing a tapir hide to take back to civilization. I stretched it between four bamboo poles and staked it out in the river, my method of causing the hair to slip. We were eating dinner on the beach, near where the hide lay submerged, when all of a sudden the *bejuco* we had used for a rope tightened up. As we jumped to our feet to see what had caused the movement, an eight-foot alligator scooted downstream. The water was not eighteen inches deep. Four times within the next two hours that *cayman* tried to steal that hide. It was only after the fourth attempt that we got in a shot, and ended his game of tag.

Dogs, the natives told me, simply could not survive on the Patuca river. Nevertheless I took my airedale, a fine pedigreed dog, along. He was a camp dog, having been raised by me on a trip to the Hudson Bay country.

I was aroused from my work on my maps by our boy Santos shouting at the

top of his voice, *"Senor! Senor! La Garto! La Garto!* The alligators got your dog!"

We grabbed our guns and rushed for the river. The airedale was out in the water, his feet braced and his weight thrown back, his head down under the water. Bill got to the edge of the river first, his shotgun raised, ready to blast the animal. By the time I arrived Bill had lowered his gun and was roaring with laughter. He pointed to the river. The dog's head was under the water all right, but he had the alligator, not the 'gator the dog.

It was only a small critter, four feet long, and the dog had it across the back, at the shoulders. For thirty minutes they fought it out, the dog growling in muffled voice and the alligator threshing the water with his tail, trying to strike the dog. At last the alligator gave ground, and a minute later he lay on the beach. It took fifteen minutes for the dog to get his teeth through the tough hide, but after that it was all over. On several occasions this same dog had plunged into the waters of Canadian lakes and brought out live fish.

We ran our dugout canoe onto the rocks in the rapids and split the side, not bad, but enough to let in the water and damage our supplies. I stopped the crack with pitch, taken from the pine trees on the upper reaches of the river, and then protected the pitch with strips of pigskin. The alligators would steal the hide off the boat faster than we could kill the pigs to replace it.

The most fun I ever had hunting alligators was in Florida. Two or three nights a week several carloads of us would drive out along the country roads and with our spotlights shine 'gators. Every night we would kill a few small ones, but seldom did we recover one, as they sank at once. We learned, however, that the father of one of the boys was going over our path the next morning, salvaging the 'gators and selling the skins. We laid a good trap for him

On a flat board we fastened two ruby red reflectors, taken from a bicycle. We placed them a foot apart and anchored the contraption a hundred yards out in the swamp, with a string leading to the road but passing underneath the road through a culvert.

That night we made sure that Dad was along, armed with a shotgun loaded with buckshot. At the right time we shined the reflectors. Dad had announced that he was leaving for the east in a day or two, and as this looked like a large animal we elected to let him do the honors.

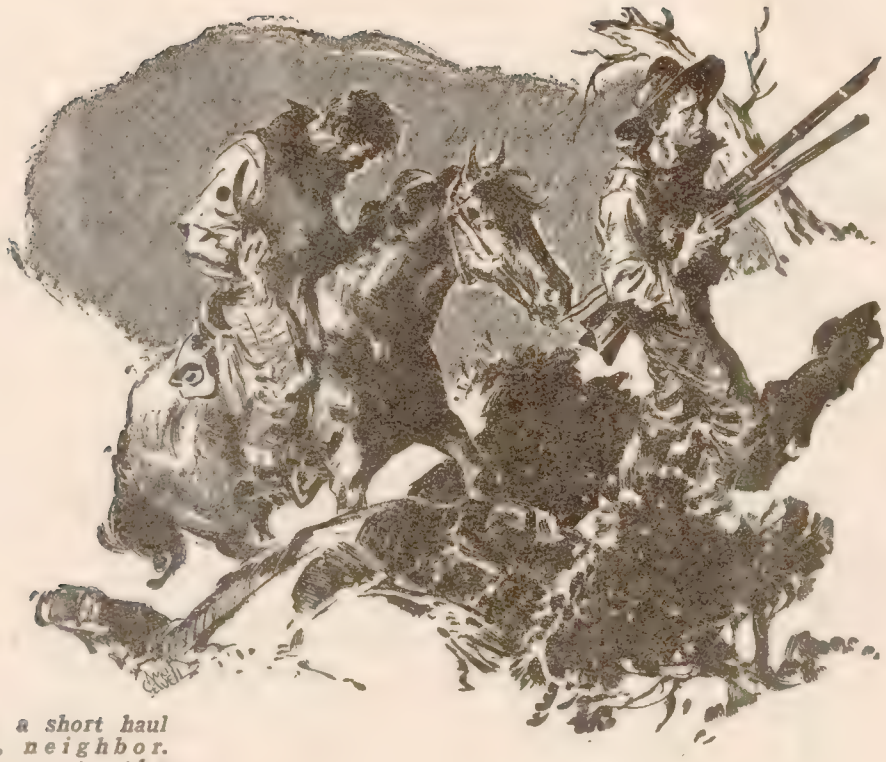
With the light shining over his head and the eyes shining up large enough to indicate a huge alligator, Dad blazed away. The eyes began to move, not trying to get away, but coming straight towards Dad. He fired again, and faster came the eyes, drawn in by a chap at the end of the culvert on the far side of the road. Dad stared at those approaching eyes, with amazement. He blazed away again, then wildly emptied his gun. As the last shot was fired the 'gator's eyes were starting up the embankment.

With a scream of terror Dad threw his gun at the monster and fled down the road.

To mention alligator hunting after that was like inviting a man to go snipe hunting, it practically broke up the game.

I'm not afraid of alligators, but I do have a respect for them, especially the old yellow-backed boys. Let one of them stalk you at night as you wander around with your spotlight. After you have quit in disgust because you can't see a thing, then look down into the water at your feet and see two ruby red eyes staring up at you in blinkless concentration, and you'll know what I mean.

They may not be dangerous, but let's give them the benefit of the doubt. Treat them like you would dynamite—always liable to do the unexpected.



"Jest a short haul now, neighbor. Hang onto the horn."

THE OTHER VALLEY

By Henry Herbert Knibbs

BEDROCK'S partner, Young Hardesty, wiped his hot face as his eyes followed the older man's pointing finger. Two men were coming down the mountain trail on foot. They would arrive at the Mebbyso mine just about in time for dinner.

Bedrock put more coffee in the pot and laid out two extra tin plates. It was a lonely life at the Mebbyso Mine, especially for Young Hardesty, who was sixteen, and chuck full of energy and curiosity. The advent of visitors loomed big.

When the strangers arrived at the camp, Young Hardesty was surprised that one of them was a tall girl. The man with her, lean, swarthy, with a curly black beard, carried a Winchester across his arm and walked like a cowpuncher.

"What's the news, neighbor?" he said as he sauntered over to the lean-to.

"That's what I was wondering," Bedrock said.

The tall stranger laughed. "My name is Wilson. This is my girl Emily."

The girl was dark, slender and strong, with deep blue eyes. His face a shade redder than usual, Young Hardesty didn't seem to see that the girl had offered to shake hands. He pretended to be deeply interested in preparing dinner.

As they sat eating under the lean-to, Wilson said he had filed on the relinquished homestead south of the Mebbyso mine. That meant that Bedrock and Young Hardesty would have neighbors. The new homesteader, who seemed a quiet, friendly sort of person, had come over to borrow a crosscut saw. After dinner Young Hardesty washed the dishes. The girl dried them.

Young Hardesty felt that it was up to him to entertain the girl. "You came a long 'way round to get here, Miss Wilson."

"Over the mountain? Well, dad thought he might pick up a deer. We're short of fresh meat."

"When I travel I ride a horse."

The girl's eyes twinkled. "Can you?"

"I said so, didn't I?"

"My, you're tough! Dad tells a story about a man who was so tough he wore a muzzle so he wouldn't bite himself. Won't you show me around the mine?"

"Sure!" Young Hardesty began to feel more at ease. He escorted his guest about the mine flat, discoursed upon shafts, drifts, stopes, timbering and high and low grade ore. "Say, just heft that. There's about five dollar's worth of gold in that chunk. You can take it along with you."

"Honest?"

"I said so, didn't I?"

"You're not as tough as you think you are," said Emily Wilson. "Come over to our spread sometime and I'll show you around."

"I'll do that. There's your dad wavin' to you."

That evening Bedrock and his young partner compared notes. The Wilsons seemed to be right friendly folk. Wilson had said he used to raise cattle in the Tonto Valley. Bedrock wondered why a cattleman should take to homesteading on the desert side of the range. It didn't seem regular. Emily Wilson, he declared, was all right.

"Meanin' her dad ain't?" queried Young Hardesty.

"I wouldn't say just that. But something is bothering him, and it ain't just homesteading."

ABOUT a week later Young Hardesty decided to make a hunt for deer. As an excuse to call on the Wilsons he would take some deer meat to them. With his old sawed-off Sharp's in the scabbard he set out on his pony, Shingles.

As he rode slowly up the mountain trail he wondered how the new homesteaders were making it. Homesteading on the desert was a tough game. Now if Wilson had taken up land on the western side of the range, a district known locally as The Other Valley, he might have been able to make a go of it. Wilson said he was going to raise alfalfa. That didn't sound regular, either. It took a lot of water to raise alfalfa. The spring on the homestead benchland south of the Mebbyso wasn't big enough for that. But that was Wilson's lookout.

Shortly after Young Hardesty reached the timbered crest of the range he jumped a buck. He fired and missed. While trailing the deer down the western slope he smelled smoke. He peered around. Half hidden by a clump of junipers was a gaunt cow. He noted the brand—W-Bar-2. He had never seen that brand before. It wasn't the Henty brand. Maybe Wilson was running a few head in The Other Valley himself. But how about that smell of smoke?

Arriving at the edge of a small clearing, Young Hardesty pulled up his horse and stared. Across the clearing stood a stocky cow pony. A cow lay hogtied near the pony. Beyond her Wilson knelt over a calf. The smell of singed hair and hide came to Young Hardesty.

Wilson rose. Bawling lustily, the calf took to the brush. Young Hardesty caught a glimpse of the raw brand, W-

Bar-2. Wilson was branding calves, which was perfectly all right. But when he turned the cow loose and ran for his horse, and Young Hardesty saw that the cow bore the Henty brand, he decided that it wasn't all right at all.

As Wilson swung to the saddle, Young Hardesty's pony nickered. The man with the black, curly beard had Young Hardesty covered before he could speak.

"Turn your horse round," said Wilson, "and keep going."

"Hell! I'm Joe Hardesty. What's the matter with you, anyhow?"

Paying no attention to what Young Hardesty said, Wilson kept his rifle leveled.

"Oh, if that's the way you feel about it, I'll move along."

Young Hardesty hated to back down. But he saw that Wilson meant business, so he swung round and rode up the valley.

He was sore all over, but not because the homesteader was stealing cattle. Bigger men than Wilson did that right along. But to be held up and given marching orders without a chance to say two words didn't set any too well. Emily Wilson had said that Young Hardesty wasn't as tough as he thought he was. Young Hardesty didn't agree with that. If her old man hadn't got the drop on him, he would have shown one member of the Wilson family which way was north. Hell of a fine neighbor, he was.

"Why, doggone him!" snorted Young Hardesty, "if he'd 'a started something and I'd had anything like an even break, I'd a blowed a hole through him so big there wouldn't be any edges."

Having got rid of his surplus spleen, Young Hardesty felt better. On the crest he jumped three deer, swung on the leader and dropped him neatly.

Bedrock stood shading his eyes against the western sun when Young Hardesty stalked into camp, the deer across the saddle.

"Reckon you found something," said Bedrock.

"I sure did." But Young Hardesty said nothing about the calf branding. His neck was still pretty hot. He wanted time to think it over.

"Mebby Wilson could use some of this meat," suggested Bedrock. "We got more than a plenty."

"Mebby he could. But he ain't gettin' any unless he comes for it."

Old Bedrock's eyebrows went up. It wasn't like the boy to be unneighborly.

BEDROCK seemed a bit surprised when, next morning, Young Hardesty said he was going over to the Wilson homestead with some deer meat. Bedrock was pleased that the boy had changed his mind.

Young Hardesty was curious as to what kind of a layout Wilson had. He was also curious as to what Wilson would do when he again met the fellow who had caught him branding a Henty calf. Saddling up Shingles, Young Hardesty set out.

Dividing the benchland south of the Mebbyso mine ran a low, brush-covered ridge. Three miles beyond the mine lay the homestead. Some fifty or sixty acres had been cleared by the former homesteader. South of the clearing, almost against the foothills, stood a log cabin, sheds and corrals. In one of the corrals loafed three saddle horses. It seemed queer that Wilson had come over to the mine on foot.

At Young Hardesty's hail, Emily Wilson came to the doorway.

"Fetched a little deer meat along," he said. "Thought mebby you could use it."

"Thanks. Yes indeed we can. I'm so tired of beef—" the girl hesitated at Young Hardesty's swift glance.

"Bedrock and me," he said, grinning, "are getting mighty tired of deer meat. That kind of evens things up."

"Father is up at the spring," said the girl. "He'll be down pretty soon." She now wore a gingham gown. The other day in an old Stetson, rowdy and jeans, she had seemed mannish—not nearly so good looking as she did when dressed like a woman.

Young Hardesty's heart thumped. A wife like that to cook for a man, and keep the place neat, wouldn't be so bad. He sat with one leg crossed over his knee, twirling a spur rowel with his thumb. He couldn't think of anything to say.

When the girl went out to hang the deer meat in the cooler, Young Hardesty sized up the cabin. Three saddles hung on the wall of the main room, above them a carbine in its boot, a pair of spurs, chaps and an old Stetson. Someone had burnt the brand W-Bar-2 on the door post, evidently the Wilson brand.

"I'm going to the spring to call dad," said Emily Wilson. "Mind if I take your pony?" Not waiting for permission, she swung into the saddle and left, the astonished Shingles kicking gravel at every jump.

Young Hardesty curled a cigarette. That female sure could ride! Skirts didn't bother her any. He wondered if she were as handy with a branding iron as her father. He also wondered just what her father would have to say. Wilson's spread was actually a cow camp, not a homestead. Young Hardesty was ready to call Wilson's bluff, let him know that he wasn't in the habit of backing down. If Wilson seemed friendly, Young Hardesty was quite willing to forget the calf branding. If Wilson wasn't friendly —well, no one could say what might happen. And that was just what Young Hardesty wished to determine. He didn't anticipate trouble, but he regretted that his Sharp's was on his saddle, and the girl was riding Shingles.

Young Hardesty was seated on the doorstep, smoking a cigarette, when Wilson and his daughter came down the spring trail. He rose and acknowledged Wilson's friendly, "Mornin', neighbor." Wilson pointed to a jackrabbit near the edge of the distant brush. "Can you drop him from here?"

"I could, all right," said Young Hardesty, immediately on his guard. "But my gun is a single shot. You're packin' a repeater."

Wilson's rifle came up. He fired. The jack dropped and lay kicking. It was a swift, sure shot. Wilson could handle a rifle. But that wasn't all that Young Hardesty noted. The three saddle horses in the corral opposite hadn't even twitched an ear at the sound of the shot. Evidently Wilson didn't use gun-shy horses.

The men sat on the doorstep. Emily Wilson was busy in the kitchen.

"How long you been in this country?" said Wilson.

"Long enough to find my way home if it ain't too dark."

"Spent much time on the other side of the range—in The Other Valley?"

It was in The Other Valley that Young Hardesty had come upon Wilson branding a Henty calf. "Mostly traveling through, or after deer, like I was yesterday."

"Emily tells me you got your deer, all right."

"I got him." Young Hardesty rose and took his Sharp's rifle from the saddle. "You can hit a deer most anywhere with this, and he'll stay down. It belonged to a renegade Indian. He was through usin' it when I took it off him."

Emily Wilson came to the doorway. "Are you the Young Hardesty that killed the Navajo buck over in the Pinnacles?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Won't you tell us about it?"

"No, ma'am. It ain't healthy to talk about folks you bumped off. The Navajo got to crowdin' me too clost."

Wilson's beard hid a smile. "Don't know that I'd want to stack up against that gun myself."

"Shucks! It's only a single shot." Young Hardesty stood the rifle against the cabin and sat down again. Wilson was pleasant enough. He didn't seem to be worrying any about calf branding. Even so, Young Hardesty was still on his guard. As a boy in Bowdry he had seen killers act mighty smooth when they were getting ready to let some fellow have it.

"Father," said Emily Wilson in a troubled tone, "did you notice the way the horses are acting?"

"A couple of buzzards are circling to get that jack I shot. Makes the horses nervous."

He had scarcely spoken when a rifle spoke in the brush across the clearing. A slug thudded into the doorpost. Wilson jumped back into the cabin. Young Hardesty grabbed up his Sharp's and dove for the back of the building. He peered round the corner of the cabin, thought he saw a movement in the distant brush, and fired.

Across in the corral the three horses stood quietly looking toward the southern slope of the ridge. The buzzards had winged higher and were floating in big circles. A lizard scampered across the door yard. It was so still that Young Hardesty thought he could almost hear the brush crackle in the heat of the sun.

"Come 'round to the back door," said Emily Wilson.

As Young Hardesty came up the girl glanced at him in a peculiar manner. "Who was it?"

"You're askin' me. All I know is, that slug pretty nigh got your dad."

WILSON stood back from the front doorway, peering out across the clearing.

"What were you shooting at?" he called to Young Hardesty.

"I saw somethin' move. Hope I didn't plug one of your cows."

"You didn't," said Wilson positively. "Emily, I'm going to take a look 'round."

"I'll side you," said Young Hardesty.

They crept through the brush, beginning a circle that would finally land them on the slope across the clearing. In about twenty minutes they had reached the spot from which the shot was fired. Round about were the tracks of shod horses. Wilson picked up an empty forty-five-seventy Winchester shell. Young Hardesty poked through the brush searching the ground. In a minute or so he was back. "Come on over here. I found somethin'."

It was a dead saddle horse. Saddle and bridle had been stripped off. The horse had been shot through the lungs. The bullet had gone clear through. "I reckon my slug got him," said Young Hardesty. The dead animal was branded H-Cross-H. That would be the Henty brand.

Wilson said nothing till they again reached the cabin.

"There's a dead horse over yonder," he told his daughter. "He's carrying the Henty brand."

"Father!"

Wilson and his daughter exchanged glances.

"I ain't surprised any," said Wilson.

"I was, kind of." Young Hardesty gathered up the reins of his pony. "I'll be lightin' a shuck for the mine. So-long, neighbor. Good-by, Miss Wilson. I'm wishin' you-all good luck."

Young Hardesty told Bedrock about the recent happenings, beginning with the calf branding in the Other Valley. The whole business was mighty queer.

"Wilson," stated Bedrock, "don't act like a cow thief. He was telling me he used to run stock over in the Tonto Valley. There's nothing queer about that, but it's kind of interesting when you put the pieces of this here puzzle

together. Old Man Henty, who was killed in the Tonto Basin war, was likewise running stock in the Basin when Wilson was living there. Folks say that Henty and his boys were kind of careless about branding anything in sight. When Old Man Henty got killed, the boys lit out. They settled yonder in The Other Valley, long before you and me was pardners. You've talked with 'em. You know what they are like."

"I told Bill Henty to go to hell once, when he asked me what I was doin' in The Other Valley. Bob Henty was with him. They showed me a fresh hide with their brand on it. Somebody had beefed one of their yearlings and got away with the meat."

"The Henty boys are willing to suspect anybody. Don't know as I blame 'em. There ain't many folks riding in The Other Valley. That there yearling didn't commit suicide."

"I told 'em that if I beefed any of their stock I wouldn't leave the hide layin' around where they would find it. They didn't bother me none, after that."

"Just between you and me," said Bedrock, "Tonto Basin folks used to say that Old Man Henty and his boys stole Wilson blind. You'll have to figure out the rest of it yourself."

That morning, while the partners worked at clearing away the rock from a shot put in the day before, Young Hardesty silently speculated as to the outcome of Wilson's arrival in the neighborhood. There was one Henty calf carrying Wilson's brand, and one dead saddle horse carrying the Henty brand. So far, it looked as if Wilson had just a little bit the best of it. Did the fellow that shot at him send the slug as a warning—miss him by inches purposely? Did the unseen rifleman imagine that kind of a bluff would scare Wilson out of the country? Young Hardesty didn't think it would. That meant there would be more trouble. Probably somebody would get killed. Anyhow, it wasn't fair to the girl that Wilson should play that kind of a game. She might get hurt. At a little distance, dressed in rowdy and jeans, she looked just like a man. One of the Henty boys might make a mistake. Young Hardesty cursed under his breath.

"What you mumbling about?" queried Bedrock.

"Grub. We started in late this mornin'. I don't know what time it is in here. But I reckon it's about noon, outside."

NEXT day, about four in the afternoon, Wilson and his daughter appeared at the Mebbyso mine. They were both mounted. Emily Wilson led a spare horse bearing a heavy pack. Her face was grave She nodded to Bedrock and Young Hardesty. Gazing past the girl, Young Hardesty saw a thin web of smoke in the southern sky.

"Must be a brush fire," he exclaimed.

Wilson shook his head. "The cabin and sheds. Burned clean to the ground. Emily and I had been over the hill all day. We saw the blaze just as we topped the ridge west of the homestead. That was about three. We made a ride, but we were too late."

"Burned out!" said Bedrock. "Now that's right bad news, neighbor."

Wilson gestured toward the pack horse. "We saved a little of our stuff—enough to do us for a spell. Lucky our beds were outside last night. We been sleeping out lately, account of the heat."

"Why don't you folks make camp up at the spring yonder?" suggested Young Hardesty. "It's cool up there, and nobody'll bother you."

"That's right!" said Bedrock heartily. "We got plenty grub on hand. All you got to do is make yourself to home."

Wilson glanced at his daughter. She flushed and nodded.

"You can stake your horses in the

meadow above the spring," said Young Hardesty. "It's close enough so you can keep an eye on them just in case—just in case a mountain lion or somebody comes down the hill."

A spare tarp, a bucket, some cooking things and a supply of provisions, with what the Wilsons had salvaged, enabled the refugees to make a comfortable camp.

Later, when the partners were alone, Young Hardesty asked Bedrock point-blank who had set fire to the homestead. Bedrock pulled at his pipe a long time before he answered. "Emily Wilson says there weren't a fire in the stove when they left. Couldn't 've been one of the cows. Never seen a cow that could strike a match."

"Huh! You teachin' Sunday School?"

"It ain't Sunday," chuckled Bedrock.

"Well I reckon I know who touched off that fire," declared Young Hardesty. "An' I reckon Wilson knows, even if he didn't see anybody do it."

"Well, we got company, anyhow," declared Bedrock. He nodded toward the thin web of smoke in the southern sky. "I wouldn't be surprised if we had more company before this here clears up. I'd took 'em in if they had been weasels."

"Weasels!" snorted Young Hardesty. "What I mean, the weasels that set fire to that cabin was brothers. And they don't spell their name with a *W*, neither."

"Our friend up at the spring ain't the kind to sit down and mourn," said Bedrock. "Being my pardner, and half owner of the Mebbyso, you're free to come and go as you please. Me, I'm going to stick pretty close to the mine. A bullet would never get far in the tunnel. It's too crooked."

Convinced that the Henty boys had set fire to Wilson's cabin, and equally convinced that Wilson wouldn't sit with a lap full of trouble and stroke its back just to hear it purr, Young Hardesty wondered how long the Wilsons would stay, where would they go when they left, and what was likely to happen in the meantime. Of one thing he was sure. You didn't let anybody come bothering folks who were visiting you, especially when one of your visitors was a girl.

The following morning Wilson left camp on foot. Possibly Emily Wilson knew where he had gone, but she said nothing about it. Bedrock and his partner were working in the tunnel. The girl tidied up the lean-to, sanded the two skillets, gave the coffee pot a much needed rinsing, and after inspecting the commissary, planned the noon meal. When Bedrock and Young Hardesty appeared she had a fire going and the table set for three.

"Your dad feeling poorly?" said Bedrock, noting the three plates.

"No."

Bedrock washed up, an unusual proceeding at noon. Young Hardesty dug up a bit of broken comb and had a tussle with his hair. It was great not to have to rustle firewood and squat over a hot fire three times a day. He rather hoped the Wilsons' stay would be indefinite.

After the noon meal, Emily Wilson called for all the soiled clothing in camp. Bedrock fetched a length of rope and strung it up for a clothesline.

"No fences here to dry 'em on," he said. "We dry 'em on the rocks. But I know how a woman likes to see 'em fluttering on a clothes line."

About four Young Hardesty said he was going to knock off work.

"That girl will keep till evening," chuckled Bedrock.

"If you think I'm worryin' about any girl—" Young Hardesty shrugged and strode out of the tunnel.

When Bedrock showed up about five-thirty, neither Wilson nor Young Hardesty were in camp.

"That boy gone bee chasing?"

"He *said* he was going up the hill to look for another deer."

Bedrock and Emily Wilson waited until seven that evening, then had supper. When nine o'clock came and neither Wilson nor Young Hardesty appeared, Emily Wilson went up to the spring camp.

Bedrock prowled round the mine flat, occasionally glancing toward the hill trail. When ten o'clock came and Young Hardesty did not show up, he turned in.

ABOUT four-thirty that afternoon Young Hardesty was on the crest of the range. He had noted the tracks of high heeled boots—Wilson's tracks made that morning. It wasn't natural for a cattleman to prowl over the hills on foot. Still, a man could keep under cover on foot easier than he could on a horse, and it was a sure bet Wilson wasn't showing himself if he could help it.

Young Hardesty sat his horse, gazing into The Other Valley. Down the slope a deer leaped a rock and disappeared into the brush. Almost instantly came the faint pop of a rifle. Maybe Wilson had gone out after meat. The sound of three more shots in rapid succession, knocked that idea out of Young Hardesty's head. Wilson was too good to have to waste all that ammunition on a buck.

Near the middle of the valley, far below, a tiny puff of smoke hung in the air. Again came the sound of a shot. This tiny puff of smoke, not bigger than a man's hat, was some distance away from the first. Another shot and a succeeding puff of smoke in still another location.

"Three guns goin'," muttered Young Hardesty. "Now I wonder who's doin' all that shootin'."

He recalled Bedrock's quiet hint to keep out of trouble. The fact that he didn't know what was going on spurred his curiosity. With a glance at the sun, Young Hardesty headed down the mountainside.

Halfway down he was able to distinguish the form of a man lying behind a boulder on the valley floor. He could see the top of a black Stetson, and the glint of metal. Wilson wore a black sombrero. From across the dry river bed in which the man in the black hat lay, came the report of a heavy caliber rifle. Immediately someone else fired from up the river bed. The man in the black hat was standing off two rifles, one directly opposite him, the other to the right.

Young Hardesty calculated swiftly. The man directly west of Wilson was drawing his fire, while the other man, on the north, was creeping round to where he could get him from the side. Without stopping to reason, Young Hardesty put his horse down the slope.

Riding from one clump of brush to another, he got within hailing distance of Wilson when a sharp wind streaked past his head, followed by the crang of a rifle. He didn't waste any time dismounting. Tying his horse in the brush, he crept to a position directly back of Wilson.

"It's me, neighbor," called Young Hardesty. "Need any help?"

The besieged man turned his head.

"You better trot along home, kid."

"I'm just watching the fireworks," said Young Hardesty. He crept nearer, saw that Wilson was reloading his Winchester clumsily, using one hand. Young Hardesty cursed vigorously. They had got Wilson through the arm or shoulder. His left arm was useless. Slugs plunked into rock and ridge round Young Hardesty. It began to get so hot he knew he would have to either make for the hillside back of him or join Wilson behind the big boulder in the stream bed.

He wasn't any too eager to do either. It wasn't his fight. But he couldn't re-

turn to camp and tell Emily Wilson that he had seen her father, his arm crippled, standing off two men down in The Other Valley. He just couldn't do that. Wriggling along the stream bed, he crawled up beside Wilson.

The cattleman had tied his handkerchief round his arm to stop the blood. He had taken off his hat. In it were eight or ten shells.

"All you got left?" said Young Hardesty. Wilson nodded.

There was no further talk. One by one Wilson used the shells, as the man up the river bed kept creeping toward a spot from which he could get a clear shot. When down to three cartridges the cattleman stopped firing. Young Hardesty and he lay still, flat on the sand. A slug whistled over the boulder, fired from the man on the west. Young Hardesty's back tingled. He nudged Wilson.

The man on the north had crept round from behind a rock and was heading for another. Although he showed himself but a second, Wilson swung his rifle and fired. The man twitched, flattened on the sand and lay still.

"That kind of evens things up," said Wilson quietly. "Got a canteen on your saddle?"

"No. Feelin' poorly?"

"Not any too stout. How did you come to get into this, anyhow?"

"I was just lookin' around."

Wilson's face was sallow white and his eyes were heavy. He had lost a lot of blood.

"Pretty soon it will be dark enough to make a break. I got two shells left," he said dully.

Swiftly dusk settled over the valley. Familiar brush and boulder looked strange in the half light. Realizing that Wilson could never get back to camp on foot, Young Hardesty asked him if he could make it to his horse, a few hundred feet beyond them. The cattleman, who had sunk into a half stupor, nodded.

"We better crawl," said Young Hardesty. "Mebby that fella across the wash ain't through yet. I'll pack your rifle. You'll need all the hands you got."

Noiselessly they started to crawl across the river bed. Burdened with his own rifle and Wilson's, Young Hardesty dragged himself along, the wounded man equally handicapped by his injured arm.

"Keep comin'," said Young Hardesty when they were about halfway across the river bed. In the dusk he rose and made a dash for the clump of brush where his pony was tied. He was leading the horse back toward Wilson when he heard the clink of a shod hoof on the rocks. It was coming toward them. Young Hardesty's heart pounded. Another sound came to him, the faint scraping sound of Wilson painfully dragging himself across the sand. Beyond Wilson loomed a vague shape that seemed to move. Evidently aware that his enemy was trailing him, Wilson struggled up and began to run. A thin flame split the darkness. Wilson went down in a heap. Young Hardesty thought that the shot had got him. Dropping the reins, he ran toward the fallen man.

From the opposite direction came the horseman, swiftly now. He reined in, and began to fire. From the angle of the spurts of flame Young Hardesty saw that he was firing toward the ground, shooting at Wilson, who was already down and helpless.

Young Hardesty could never distinctly remember just what happened immediately after that. He knew that he had raised the rifle he carried, which happened to be Wilson's, and had thrown a shot at the man on the horse. Following a confused blur, the sound of a horse running, Young Hardesty had a vague recollection of having reached Wilson, who had not been hit a second time but who had stumbled just as his enemy fired.

Now he was helping Wilson into the saddle. Young Hardesty led the horse up the slope from the river.

"Did you get him?" said Wilson in a high pitched, feverish voice.

"I didn't get nobody," said Young Hardesty. "You been dreamin'."

After a long slow pull they reached the crest of the range. Young Hardesty stopped to breathe the pony. Immediately Wilson slumped from the saddle and lay in a heap on the ground. Young Hardesty slapped Wilson's face, revived him, and once more got him into the saddle.

"Just a short haul now, neighbor," he said. "She's all downhill. Hang onto the horn."

And so they came into camp. It was midnight. Emily Wilson was up and dressed. Bedrock got busy. Young Hardesty flung himself upon his cot and was asleep before anyone had a chance to question him.

EARLY that morning Young was awakened by a sharp flash of lightning. Up in the hills thunder rolled and reverberated. A sudden wind twisted the tops of the brush above camp. Through the following silence came the patter of a few heavy raindrops. With a rush the storm came down. Rivulets formed and cut across the mine flat. Wilson, who was on a cot in the open, was moved to the mine tunnel. Emily Wilson came down from the spring camp in slicker and Stetson. She sat beside her father in the mine tunnel. Bedrock and Young Hardesty stuck it out in the lean-to. They had weathered many a heavy storm, but this was a cloudburst.

The morning was spent straightening up around camp. Wilson didn't want a doctor. He said a hole through his arm didn't amount to anything, that he had been used worse.

Bedrock finally got Young Hardesty aside and questioned him. Young Hardesty dodged the main issue by stating that the cloudburst had come just at the right time—it had washed out any tracks that might lead to trouble.

"Was you mixed up in that trouble?"

"I fetched Wilson home after he got hit," was all that Young Hardesty would say.

Bedrock was not greatly surprised when, about three that afternoon a Henty cowboy rode into the mine camp. Without preamble he said he was looking for the man that had killed his boss and his boss's brother.

"Why did you come here?" said Bedrock quietly.

The cowboy gestured toward Emily Wilson. "I reckon her old man knows something about it."

Neither Emily Wilson nor Young Hardesty knew that both the Henty boys had been killed. Young Hardesty had fired at a figure in the dusk, had heard a horse running. Now he knew that both the Hentys were dead. He closed his teeth on the fact. The Henty hand wouldn't get any information from him. Bedrock himself showed no surprise. The Henty cowboy eyed the silent group belligerently. "Wilson around here anywhere?"

"He's in the mine tunnel, asleep," stated Bedrock.

The cowboy started toward the tunnel. Bedrock stepped in front of him. "You can talk to Wilson. But you better leave your gun with me."

"The hell I will!"

"Then you don't go in."

Bedrock was unarmed, but Young Hardesty had picked up his Sharp's.

"Private property. Keep out," he said with a hard grin.

The cowboy's face flamed as he glanced at Emily Wilson.

"If there wasn't a woman here—" he began, when Emily Wilson said gravely, "If I'm in the way, I'll be glad to go."

"It ain't necessary," stated Bedrock. "He's going to leave right now."

The Henty hand wasn't afraid, neither was he a fool. He had no authority to search the mine property. Swinging around, he stalked to his horse. With a final glance at the girl he turned and rode up the mountain trail.

THREE days later Sheriff Sam Overholt of Bowdry rode into the mine camp. With him was a deputy. He knew Bedrock and Young Hardesty well. He had not met Emily Wilson till then.

"Here's the idea," said Overholt, a stout, direct man with a quick brown eye. "Bob Henty and Bill have been killed. Somebody shot 'em. A couple of the Henty hands fetched their bodies into Bowdry. It was somebody packin' a forty-four did the job. Got any such shootin' iron in camp?"

Bedrock produced his own Winchester.

"It ain't been out of camp for over a month," he said, handing the rifle to the sheriff.

"I'll take your word for it. Anybody here been out of camp recent?"

"I have," said Young Hardesty. "The day before the cloudburst I was chousin' around The Other Valley when I run onto Wilson. He was layin' in the river bed with a hole through his arm. I fetched him to camp."

"Is that all?"

"That was a plenty! It was all I could do to keep him from fallin' off Shingles."

"Shingles, eh? So you fetched him back on your pony?"

"That was the how of it."

"Who owns those three horses staked yonder?"

"My father and I," said Emily Wilson.

"Then he must have been afoot when he got hit," said the sheriff.

"He was," said Young Hardesty.

"How's he gettin' along now?"

"First class." Bedrock gestured toward the tunnel. "Want to talk to him?"

"That's what I came here for," stated Sheriff Overholt.

Young Hardesty immediately started up the trail toward the tethered horses.

The sheriff didn't say that previous to the killing the Henty brothers had reported some illicit calf branding, and that Wilson had taken up land south of the Mebbyso mine. Nor did Overholt say that one of the Henty cowhands had reported the killing and charged Wilson with it. Overholt knew that ever since the Tonto Basin war, a feud had existed between the Hentys and the Wilsons. The Henty boys were wiped out. Wilson might be able to answer some questions.

"I'll go with you," said Emily Wilson as the sheriff and his deputy started toward the tunnel.

"Father," said Emily as they entered the tunnel, "it's Sheriff Overholt. He—"

Wilson's cot was empty. Swiftly Emily Wilson noted that her father's hat and rifle were not there. Her astonishment was evident.

"He must have heard us talkin'," said Overholt. "How far back does this tunnel go?"

"I've been through it. I'll get a candle and show you." If her father was hiding somewhere back in the tunnel and she went ahead of the sheriff, her father would not use his rifle. Calling to him, she kept on into the hillside, Overholt and his deputy stumbling behind her. As they neared the end of the tunnel a draft of fresh air struck their faces. "That shaft there," said the girl, "leads to the open, south of us."

"We'll look, anyhow," said Overholt. "But I'm beginnin' to think I dropped in about a day too late."

They reached the opening on the southern hillside. Near it sat Young Hardesty solemnly counting some small change.

"How do you like our timberin'?" he

said, gesturing toward the shaft.

The sheriff made no reply. He stood gazing at the ground. "Was it your horse he rode, or one of his own?" he gestured toward the fresh hoof tracks in the gravel.

"One of his own."

Emily Wilson glanced quickly at Young Hardesty. She had not known that he had engineered the escape—saddled up one of Wilson's horses while she and the officers were in the tunnel, and led it to the mouth of the shaft. Her eyes thanked Young Hardesty. Overholt eyed Young Hardesty shrewdly. "Joe, I didn't think you'd play that kind of a trick on me."

"If keepin' you from gettin' killed is a trick," stated Young Hardesty, "then I played her."

"I guess Wilson would have listened to me."

Young Hardesty shook his head. "If you'd tried to take him he'd killed you, sure as hell."

"How do you know?"

"He said so."

"Then," said Overholt, shrugging, "I guess he meant it."

When they returned to the camp Bedrock told them about the burning of Wilson's homestead. Overholt listened intently, questioned Emily Wilson, and finally, after a meal at the mine, departed. He and his deputy rode over the hill into The Other Valley, following the tracks of a horse that had traveled south. When they came to the fork in the trail that led to the Henty ranch, Overholt reined up. "Jack, we didn't have a thing on Wilson. It's dead open and shut that he did some brandin' that wasn't regular. And it's dead open and shut that the Henty boys burned him out. One of 'em took a shot at him when he was standin' in his doorway, so Bedrock tells me.

"Now I figure Wilson set out to get the Henty boys. But that cloudburst washed out all tracks. Whether they ambushed him or he ambushed them, don't matter. They had a fight. He got 'em both. Now he's headed south. I reckon there won't be any more killin' in The Other Valley for some time. Got any ideas on the subject?"

"Got one."

"Let's have it."

"That kid knows a whole lot more about the fight than he's going to tell."

"She's a fine lookin' girl," said Overholt. "And straight."

"I guess that settles it."

"No." Overholt gestured. "Anytime I run onto Wilson I'm takin' him in, but I ain't ridin' to Mexico to get him. I reckon we best jog over to the Henty ranch and see the hands. Burns, who was so hot to get Wilson, needs talkin' to. I aim to tell him that if he monkeys around the Mebbyso, as long as that girl is there, he's likely to get hurt."

From the crest of the range Young Hardesty saw Overholt and his deputy pause at the fork in the valley trail and finally take the western branch. Wilson had ridden south. His last word to Young Hardesty had been, "Tell Emily I'm heading for Nogales." Reining around, Young Hardesty started down the hillside. Bedrock and the girl ceased talking as he rode into camp.

"Your dad headed for Nogales," said Young Hardesty. "Sam Overholt and Jack took the trail to Henty's ranch."

"Then," said Bedrock, "I guess we'll have supper."

YOUNG HARDESTY was downhearted. He knew it would happen, but he had not expected that Emily Wilson would leave the morning after her father left. He argued that Overholt might be waiting for her to make just such a move, that he would follow her and locate her father.

"I'm not going to take dad's trail," she said. "I'm going to take the road.

It's longer, but it will be easier going." She had packed their few belongings on one of the horses, saddled the other. She was ready to leave. Young Hardesty gnawed his lower lip.

"I reckon you're goin'," he said slowly. He flushed. "Anyhow, I'm goin' to chouse along with you as far as Grant. We're plumb out of matches."

Bedrock's big white beard hid a smile. They might run short on flour, or bacon, but they never were out of matches.

Down the mine trail rode Young Hardesty and the girl. They were about the same size. At a distance they looked like a couple of sprightly young cowhands. The old man shook his head. It was too bad the boy was taking it so hard. But it was natural enough. Emily was a fine, quiet girl, as capable as a man, and mighty good looking.

Young Hardesty thought the five miles to Grant the shortest journey he had ever made. They hadn't talked much, he thinking of what he intended to say in farewell, the girl thinking about her father. Near the edge of town they drew up.

"I reckon I'll be saying good-by, now," declared Young Hardesty.

"Good-by, Joe." The girl gave him her hand. Young Hardesty squeezed it, let go of it awkwardly.

"I almost forgot something." Young Hardesty's face was pale, his eyes over bright. He had been in some mighty tight corners, but this was the worst.

"Miss Wilson," he stammered, "I'm askin' you to marry me."

Some girls would have laughed, or at least smiled. Emily Wilson did neither. "That's nice of you, Joe. I sure like you a lot. But—"

"I ain't broke. I'm half owner of the Mebbyso."

Emily Wilson nodded. "It isn't that. But I couldn't leave dad. Then, I'm eighteen. You're sixteen. You're a mite young to think of getting married."

"Well, I been thinkin' of it, just the same," said Young Hardesty stubbornly.

"I didn't get a chance to tell you how much I appreciate your helping father. I'm telling you now. From what he told me, you did a whole lot more for him than help him up on your horse, and fetch him back to the mine. But that's just between you and me."

"I reckon that's about all there is between us." Young Hardesty's tone was bitter.

"Don't say that, Joe. Maybe, someday, I'll meet you again. We'll both be older. Then things will look different to us."

"Shucks! You won't look any different to me."

Emily Wilson smiled. "You're a good kid." She swung her horse, her hand on the lead rope of the pack horse. "So long, Joe. I won't forget."

Young Hardesty braced himself, sat straight in the saddle. He had lost out, but he wasn't going to show it.

"So long," he called, waving a cheerful farewell.

Again the girl turned as she rode, nodded toward the town of Grant. "Don't forget the matches."

Matches! Now if that wasn't just like a female! Always thinking of housekeeping and such, even when a fellow was telling her he liked her better than any girl in the world, and wanted to marry her. But, come to think of it, the right kind of girls always remembered about food and cooking and such things. Doggone all of 'em, anyhow!

It was a long five miles back. Young Hardesty allowed himself a day dream. He had never known that a fellow could care so for a woman. Maybe, someday, he would meet Emily Wilson again and she would change her mind. He awakened from his dream to facts. He was here, on the mine road. Someday was a long way off, like The Other Valley.

The Camp-Fire

Where readers, writers and adventurers meet.

THE name of Tracy Richardson, soldier of fortune, has appeared fairly often in Camp-Fire because he happened to reminisce about the Canadian "American Legion" and a number of comrades who had been there too chimed in.

Recently he came into the office and said, "Are you interested in alligators?"

This is a difficult question to answer offhand, but we asked him to leave what he had written, and it appears in this issue. And on request Tracy Richardson made this outline of a career lived in gunsmoke.

I was born during a cyclone, out in western Nebraska, and seem to have been sort of pixilated ever since. My predominating trait, I'm not proud of it but admit it, is stubbornness. This I think was acquired at the age of five when a Missouri mule kicked me in the stomach.

I have fought under ten flags in ten different wars and don't have a single medal to show for it. I think that's some kind of a record.

Back in 1909 and 1910 I started soldiering down in Nicaragua, and teamed up with Sam Dreben, the fighting Jew. After we had Zelya run out of the country and our candidate, Juan Estrada, seated in the president's chair, we hopped it over to Honduras and helped Lee Christmas make a president out of Manuel Bonilla. Before that we turned down a chance to go with the rebels against Diaz in Mexico.

After Honduras, Sam went to New Orleans to get a boatload of arms and ammunition and I went to Venezuela to wait for it. Sam and his crowd never showed up, but the Venezuelan army did and my partner Bill, Lolita, a native girl, and myself hiked through the jungle from the coast to the Orinoco river, floated down on a raft and got a Dutch steamer out of the country. The girl went into a convent, I went to New Orleans to find out what had happened to Dreben. Then we joined the Red Flag revolution in Mexico against Madero.

After the Red Flag outfit blew up, I joined Huerta's regular army in Mexico City as colonel of artillery. I was still there when the navy shelled Vera Cruz. I borrowed another man's wife and passport, and made it to Vera Cruz, but the margin was *very* narrow.

General Fred Funston kept me busy working in the army intelligence until in July when rumors began to float around, and I beat it to the U. S. just in time to have a real war burst in my face. I hiked to Canada and enlisted in the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, regimental number 865.

Went overseas in September, in France in December, got shot up during the second battle of Ypres. Sent to hospital in England and started taking a course in mining engineering at the Royal School of Science.

Sent back to Canada, commissioned a Lieut. and assigned to the 97th Bn. in charge of Headquarters company and the machine guns. The 97th Bn. was called the American Legion and recruited from Americans. After being kicked around for a long time I found out the Legion would never be sent to France as a unit, so I transferred to the Royal Naval Air Service.

Trained in England, sent to France. Was flying there when the U. S. entered the war. Was banged up and went into hospital in England again and did some more school work. Wangled a transfer to the American service.

Built the school of aerial gunnery at Selfridge field and was in charge of training. Sent to France and had charge of training

of aerial gunnery at St. Jean de Mont until the end of the war. Went back to England finished my schooling.

Been doing exploration work and mining ever since the war, but some of the old wounds have caught up with me and I've slowed down about ninety percent. When I went to be examined for pension the doctor measured my scars, said they had healed nicely and that there was nothing wrong with me, so no pension.

I really think that when a man's been wounded sixteen times he should have one little medal, don't you?

J. B. HARSTONE, D.S.O., O.B.E., of Vancouver, British Columbia, writes to Camp-Fire. The letter he enclosed was from C. R. Dansey, of Sydney, Australia, and sent a picture of the Australian stock saddle, which is reproduced here. Except for the lack of horn, it looks very much like the easy-riding "hulls" of our own West.

Some time since I sent a letter to your Major Dupuy regarding the methods of riding and training of horses in North America and Australia. The letter and the reply appeared in *Adventure*. The reply was very interesting and has brought me some letters from friends from whom I have not heard for years.

Now, however, I have one from a stranger which is also interesting and I take the liberty of enclosing it to you to make whatever use of you may think fit. You certainly have a wide distribution.

It would seem that the Aussie breaking saddle has a high cantle as our own Western stock saddle, no horn of course as they don't rope there, I understand, but the high tree of the American type is compensated for by the roll for the knees.

H. BEDFORD-JONES gives us this time in his historical series the sledge-hammer duel of the Monitor and the Merrimac. His research and general conclusions on that battle leave him somewhat puzzled about one thing (which wasn't left at all in doubt by the Yankee textbooks we studied as boys) —who won the fight? Bedford-Jones says:

The odd thing about this, apparently a pivotal battle of history, is that nobody is quite sure who won it. Had not the *Virginia*, as the *Merrimac* was actually named, lost her iron ram she might have put the *Monitor* out of business. She was impervious to heavy shot, but had nearly been put out of business by rifle-fire in the first day's fighting. The *Monitor* was in the position of the British at the Jutland scrap; she held the ground and was damned glad to be holding it. However, the general opinion of naval experts is that she may be credited with the win.

Neither ship was seaworthy. The *Monitor* foundered a few months later. The *Merrimac* was run ashore and blown up by her commander after the Union forces captured Norfolk; she had too much draft to get up the James river, and not speed enough to get to sea. She was no novelty, for the French navy had put ironclads to the test in the Crimean war, but the *Monitor* was a definite answer to ironclads and as such was a new thing.

THANKS to these comrades for their good letters:

Edw. F. Hinkle, Detroit, Mich.; V. A. Masengil, Eugene, Oregon; C. Willis Finlayson, Omaha, Nebraska; S. E.

Atcheson, St. Augustine, Fla.; G. C. Leland, Overton, Texas; Virginia Webster, Houston, Texas; Gerald J. Aston, South Wales, Great Britain; Sofus Anderson, Larkin, N. D.; H. Hansen, 529 Cleveland St., Brooklyn, N. Y.; Rev. H. E. C. Mendis, Matale, Ceylon; B. Gilhart, Peoria Heights, Ill.; J. Whelan, Strokestown, Co. Roscommon, Ireland. A. A. Christensen, Namu, British Columbia; John Houston, Londonderry, Ireland; Donald M. McRae, Berry Creek, California; Frank D. Blue, New Orleans, La.; J. S. Miller, Milwaukee, Wis.; Herbert Schofield, Brooklyn, N. Y.; George W. E. Smith, Fort Wayne, Indiana; William P. Brodie, Toronto, Canada; Roy C. McHenry, Binghamton, N. Y.; Herb R. Wunder, Petersburg, Kentucky; Paul L. Benner, Portland, Maine; Col. J. M. Coffin, San Francisco, Calif.; C. Hughes Robertson, Salisbury, Maryland; W. E. Cookson, Philadelphia, Pa.; Mack Kelley, West Palm Beach, Florida; Edward John Husted, Maple Glen, Pa.; Frank Danby, Meriden, Conn.; Roscoe K. Burrows, Mystic, Conn.; Robert Cahill, New Canaan, Conn.; Dr. J. T. Saunders, Asheville, N. C.; John W. Anderson, Orlando, Florida; C. F. Cox, Evansville, Indiana; T. H. Savage, Greensburg, Pa.; H. L. Schneider, Kasai, Belgian Congo; J. J. Anzalone, Shaker Heights, Ohio; William F. Avery, New York City; Carrington Eddy, Mio, Michigan; John W. Skipwith, Milwaukee, Wis.

TO GIVE added emphasis to a new Lost Trails query, can any comrade help out Charles W. Cantrell on this request?

Have read *every issue* of *Adventure* since it was *first* published, never have missed a copy, no matter where I chanced to be. So I am what you might term a constant reader.

Now I address my first letter to you. Shortly before the Spanish War, I joined a band of men, then gathered in New Orleans, to filibuster in Cuba. We were under the command of a soldier of fortune, by name John Lewin, (Gentleman) late of the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment (Lt.). In the Company was O'Neil Sivere of Tennessee, whose father had been Governor of Tennessee, and he was at that time a space writer on the New Orleans Times-Democrat. I would be pleased to hear from him or from Lt. John Lewin, and would appreciate your mention of same in *Lost Trails*. I learned some years ago that O'Neil was a sports writer on one of the Eastern papers.

C. BLACKBURN'S fact story about red sharks prompts this suggestion from Colonel J. M. Coffin, U. S. A., Retired, of San Francisco:

Each year about the big tides of August—*Red Sharks* appear at Bolma's Bay not far north of San Francisco—members of my club fish for them—usually with swordfish outfits—they are large and vicious and about half the time carry away the gnat—Perhaps by questioning on definite points Mr. Miller desires to know he could obtain information from:

Chas. R. Burkhart
Secty. S. F. Striped Bass Club
217 Vicksburgh St.
San Francisco, Cal.

The sharks remain in this vicinity about one month only.

ON THE same subject an excellent letter came from Florida, and it has been mislaid. It was carefully put aside—somewhere—to go to the printers. Perhaps the comrade who wrote it will be kind enough to repeat—it had to do with a shark fishing industry near a certain Florida beach.

Recently we've been reading a new book, published in Australia, called "Fangs of the Sea," by Norman Caldwell and Norman Ellison. It is the account of a long experience in fishing for sharks. One anecdote from it appears here. This one is from a chapter called "Caged with Death." A paragraph of preface is needed.

A few hard bitten fishermen have been stretching a net across a deep tidal creek on the northeastern coast of Australia, in the general vicinity of the Great Barrier Reef. Their net has snared a big

saw shark, as they call it, and the brute has been slashing the net to pieces. They've gathered in rowboats or "flatties" to get the sawfish clear before it did any more damage, and in the struggle they've all been overboard.

Plumb disgusted and profane, they gather up the wreckage of their net and return to the cabin of their boat. There these hardboiled Aussies have a cup of tea, and start telling about other disinteresting experiences with the cows, as they call their sharks.

"I owned a couple of fish-traps once, in one of them bays near Grassy. I was livin' on the mainland then, and builds me 'ome on the bank of the creek on the northern end of the bay, and lives solitary like. I ain't much of a woman's man, and I don't suppose any woman would live in a Gawd forsaken 'ole like that. The creek almost dries at low tide, and in the 'ot sunshine, the banks run to mud, dirty brown stuff an' very treacherous.

"In the centre of the creek was deep 'oles where the barramundi and salmon 'ide until the tide comes in. I used to net a lot of fish them times. It was 'ot as the 'obbs of 'ell in the creek, for no sea-breeze ever found its way in to cool it, and towards evening the ruddy sandflies and moskeeters kept yer scratchin' all the time. Well, one night I was sittin' in me 'umpy eatin' me tucker. Away in the distance I could 'ear the heavy rumblin's of a thunderstorm, and it made me feel 'appy, for it meant an 'eavy fall o' rain. That was what I wanted to drive the fish from the creeks into me traps, fer the next day was me marketin' day, and all the fish I got I 'ad to pull in me flattie to Cannon Valley. A man who owned a lorry used to meet me there and sell the fish at the nearest town. We useter go fifty-fifty.

"All the gear I 'ad for fishin' was two nets for blockin' the creeks like the skipper does, and the two fish-traps in the bay. It was never visited by toorists, an' I didn't want no stickybeaks a-watchin' what I were doin' of, or cadgin' me fish for bait; so the further I get away from them the better I feels.

"Yes, them were good traps, and wot's more I builds 'em single-'anded. Took a bit of time for I could only work at low tide, and I fitted 'em with two cages instead of one. It were a cow of a job unwindin' the coils of wire nettin' six feet 'igh. I chuckles now to think 'ow strongly I 'ad put in the wooden stakes to 'old the wire upright. By cripes, me arms were fair torn off with aches, for I 'ad to dig the crowbar down inter the coral reef to stick the stakes in, which I 'ad to cut and cart from the mangrove swamp 'alf a mile away. About a 'undred of them all told, good 'efty wooden stakes, for the wire 'ad to stand against ruddy gropers.

"After fastenin' the wire nettin' round a tree at the shore end, the guidin' fence went over the reef for about two 'undred feet, and two specially shaped wings 'elped to lead big and little fish into the wire cages. Them cages were made from the same kind of wire nettin', and were six feet 'igh, and six feet wide. Yes, they were a perfect prison for fish. They were kept alive for days, each tide addin' to 'em. At 'igh tide the traps was well covered with water, and even at the lowest tide when the reef was almost drained dry, there was enough water at the bottom of the cages to keep the fish alive until the tide comes in again. I allowed fer that by diggin' out the reef. I 'ad ter make a wire gate with a frame o' wood at the back entrance of each cage, so that I could get in an' out.

"Fer scoopin' out the fish into the flattie, I 'ad made a scoop about three feet in length and two wide. Didn' 'ave no 'andle. I grips it by clutchin' it with me fingers locked in the wire-nettin'. It were ruddy awful to 'andle with big fish in it. Still, it 'eld the fish, and lets the water out, and that was all I wanted. When the fish comes across the reef in search o' tucker, they runs into the wire-nettin' fence; this leads them into the receivin' cage that 'as a long narrow entrance, but which would expand-like to let big fish in.

"The receivin' cage were closed at the top, but a wire funnel led into the first of the closed traps, from which another led into the main trap or cage. Sometimes I 'ad to get turtles out of the receivin' cage, an' small sharks an' big groper 'ad managed to get in. The ruddy cows used to do a lot of damage to the wire with their teeth before I finds 'em.

"Me market day comes in good-oh after the storm, the sun shinin' bright, and the birds singin'. So after a mite of tucker and a drink o' tea, I pops into the flattie and starts off fer the traps. When I gets to the first one, it made me 'eart glad to see all I 'ad got in it: fish of all kinds, barramundi, groper, trevally, salmon, butterfish, and some kinds that were no good fer eats. It didn't take me long to get the wire fasteners off the gate and jump in alongside the fish up to me waist in water. Soon I 'ad the jumpin' and kickin' fish into the flattie, and I offs to the other trap at the other end of the bay.

"It was much shallower there, but good feedin'-ground fer fish. When I got to about

thirty feet from the trap, there wasn't enough water to float the flattie with its load o' fish. So I throws out me anchor, grabs me scoop and wades to the trap. Floatin' on the surface water of the front cage were several large fish, all dead and smelly. Sometimes when the tide be extra low and the sun real 'ot, the big fish can't stand the warm water, and ruddy well peg out.

"Well, I gets into the cage and picks up the floatin' fish and chucks 'em out of the gateway, and then I spots an 'ole in the next cage wire—a big 'un—an' also one in the cage I were in. I knows that if I did not mend 'em before the tide comes in, I would lose all me next-tide catch. So out I gets and off to the flattie for the lick o' me life, grabs some mendin' wire, and 'ops it back.

"From the first cage where the 'ole were under water, I 'ad to throw out a bloomin' heagle ray that 'ad a sting in its tail a foot long. A rotten job it were, the slippery brute slidin' one way first and then the other, keepin' me 'oppin' up and down all the time, a-dodgin' the sting. Still, in the end I gets it by the heye sockets and hout it goes. Then I gets into mendin' the 'ole. It were a big one all right, an' took me much longer than I thought, and as the tide was risin' fast I were glad when it was finished.

"I 'astily fastened up the gate tight with wire, then gets into the front cage and starts mendin' the 'ole before startin' to scoop out the fish. The water was well over me waist, and I ain't too big, and the fish might escape as I were scoopin' them up. The wire was twisted into all kinds of shapes and I 'ad to lace it on to the main bit. I 'ad nearly finished when me wire cutters which I 'ad stuck through the wire wall to 'old them safe, slipped and fell outside the cage. I 'ad to swear to myself a minute or two, for I were tryin' to 'urry, as the water was risin' steadily.

"I were just putting the finishin' touches to the break, and 'ad me fingers of one 'and interlocked in and out of the wire, when all of a sudden I feels a smashin' blow on the wall of the wire, which made me look up and . . .

"My Gawd! I'll never forget the shock I got: it made cold shivers crawl up and down me spine. I were lookin' into the unblinkin' eyes an' snarlin' jaw of a ruddy big tiger shark. The cow charged again, an' the whole bloomin' cage shivered as if it were alive—and frightened too—the wires bendin' with the force of the blow. The water was risin' over the level of the gate, and me flattie seemed miles away.

"I cussed meself proper for not bringin' the flattie back with me when I brought the wire, fer it would 'ave come a lot closer. And I cussed meself 'arder for bein' such a ruddy fool fer throwin' out the dead fish into the water so near the trap. I were that stunned that I didn't know what to do. The shark looked 'ungry, and there was me lookin' at it through the open door of the cage. When I tumbles to this I made an 'asty grab to close it, the ruddy shark being too late as it went fer me 'and, and 'it the wire.

"Me brain seemed to give out workin'. 'Ere I were trapped in a cage of me own makin', trapped like a bloomin' fish. And didn't I know just how soon the tide would be over me 'ead and cage. I either 'ad to get out or drown. But 'ow was I to get out of the trap with a twelve-foot tiger shark a-watchin' me every move? Maybe, it were the fish 'e were watchin' and wantin' and not me, but 'ow was I to know? An' every time I see that shark turn its optics on me, the pumps inside me 'eart almost stopped a-workin'.

"There it was with 'is mouth always on the chew sideways like, seemin' to be conjurin' up in its mind what a good feed it was goin' to 'ave. It made me fair sick to watch it; even now me bingy is feelin' real bad thinkin' of it. There were me in the cage with the tide risin' faster than I could think, an' the wind blowin' from the south-east which made it worse, fer later the waves would stir up mud an' sand, an' I wouldn't be able to see what the old 'Johnny Nark' were up to. There was me, I tell yer, perched on one side of the wire wall like a monkey, an' as far away from the man-eater as I could get.

"Then I gets the idea of givin' the shark a feed like I have seen 'em do at Taronga Zoo at Sydney. So grabbin' 'old of a big diamond-scaled mullet, I opens the gate cautiously and 'eaves the mullet at the bloomin' shark. But in me 'aste I fergets the ruddy mullet could swim, an' instead of goin' into the shark's mouth like a proper gentleman, he wags 'is tail, and 'ops off, the cow.

"I says to meself, 'better luck next time,' and I manages to grab a big king salmon by the tail, and it wanted some 'oldin', so I gets its 'ead outside the gate, and it waggles its body about like one of them hactress women does, almost askin' for the shark to come along an' heat it. Well, the bloomin' lump of grim death spots that there fish and comes at the double. And me bein' no 'ero and scared, I pulls the fish in and closes the gate on the shark's face.

"Feedin' the shark were no use. Another rush from the shark, and it were sniffin' all round the wire as if he were a dog on the

scent of a rabbit. If he seed a fish, he would bump, bump, bump into the wire nettin' an' I thanked Gawd the stakes were driven in strong an' no shoddy work. Yes, they an' the wire were the only things that stood between me an' an 'orrible death.

"Sometimes now, o' nights, I sees the dark striped b—— swimmin' around me bunk, an' I moans meself awake. It was not long before I were hangin' on to the inner wall with the waves slappin' me face. I knew that the morning tide would be a big one, an' it was only a short time before the cage would be completely covered by water, an' unless I could escape I 'ad to drown. Rescue was impossible unless a miracle 'appened, but I never knew a miracle to work proper when yer wanted it to. I cocks me eye over every inch o' the water in the bay, but nary a sign of boat could I see. I felt me doom were sealed. I was a 'appy lad when I left the 'umpy a few hours before, whistlin' like a lark. . . .

"I wriggles a few inches higher, an' one of me bare feet came into contact with the scoop leanin' on the wall just below me. Suddenly I wonders if I could do anything with it. Could I put it over me 'ead and shoulders an' try and escape that way? I looks at the shark again, an' the idea goes away quick.

"Then a brain-wave comes into me 'ead, and I feels a ruddy fool fer not thinkin' of it before, and I goes into action at once. Grabbin' 'old of the scoop, I draws a deep breath, an' sinks into the water below me an' starts to catch an' ram fish into the scoop as rapidly as possible, comin' up ter breathe an' down again, rammin' the fish in tight, me 'ands bein' torn by the sharp spikes an' fins. But what were a little pain when me life were at stake? So jammin' the fish in tight, 'eads an' tails come stickin' through the sides of the wire. When I gets it full, I turns over the top ends of the scoop so no fish could escape.

"After goin' up for breath several times, I gradually drags the scoop with the fish to just under the gate, leavin' it leanin' against the wire wall. Up I goes fer air, an' watches till I sees the shark swimmin' away from me; then droppin' into the water again very soft-like, me tremblin' fingers were soon tryin' to undo the wire fastenin's I 'ad made to keep the gate closed. Just as I were goin' to throw the gate wide open an' drop the scoop outside, I sees the other shark."

Robbins stopped, sucked furiously at his pipe which had gone out, and after lighting it again, he went on:

"That did it. I climbs to me perch, gaspin' fer breath, and howled like a bloomin' kid. All me 'opes were dashed to the ground, an' I were the most miserable man on earth. With one shark there 'ad been a tiny chance of escape, but with two, wot 'ope did I 'ave? The new shark was of a kind I 'ad never set eyes on afore. I didn't know much about sharks then, and I wants to know less now, but I 'ad only recognized the tiger by its striped back, and I realized that one bite from the big half-moon shaped jaw of the strange shark meant death, fer he were bigger'n the tiger.

"There were me gaspin' fer breath, when I sees the water start swirlin' an' boilin'. With a mighty bump, first one shark, then the other, charged at the wall against which the fish-filled scoop was lyin'. Then both sharks started to attack the wall together, the walls of wire bendin' an' the stakes strainin' as though they would snap. They were 'unger-crazed, an' I thought if I 'ad to die, I would quit the world fightin'. So down I goes again inter the water, fumbles at the wire fastenin's, and throws open the gate, a haction that shoos the sharks away for a moment. Then with a 'eave, I lifts up the scoop, drops it outside and goes up for me breath.

"The tiger shark scented the scoop first, its ruddy teeth showin' as it charged an' tore at the scoop. Then the second shark joined the tucker without a please or thank yer. Its awful lookin' fangs stuck out from its jaw as it came forward with a rush. As far as I could see, gents, first one shark 'ad the scoop, then the other, both tryin' to swim away with the prize, only to drop it for a fight with each other. Soon the water was so much red-coloured with fish blood I could not see them, but it seemed to me that they were gettin' further away all the time.

"By that time, poor me was gaspin' fer breath, with me mouth glued to the wire roof, suckin' in air only in the hollow between the waves as they passed over me 'ead. Unable to 'ang on any longer, I takes me chance, an' though nearly choked I climbs out through the gate an' on to the roof of the cage, where I lies like a dead 'un for a minute or so.

"Before long, I were climbin' along the fence to the shore. Gawd! I did feel crook."

From time to time, as we have room for them, we'll publish other chapters from the books on sharks.

H. B.

Ask Adventure

Information you can't get elsewhere.

THE great wall of Texas was not built by human hands.

Request:—Do you happen to know anything of the findings at Rockwall, Texas? I have heard that there has been unearthed there a wall of rock, of rock not native to that region. They tell me the wall is laid out in a rectangular form, one mile on each side.

Can you give me any details on this project? Is it a genuine archeological find, or is it another publicity stunt?

Can you tell me who is working on the project and who is sponsoring or directing the operations? Is it supposed to be the boundaries of a former city, or are there any guesses as to its origin?

—Dan Thrapp, West Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Mr. J. W. Whiteaker:—The County of Rockwall was created and organized in 1873. It is in the North Texas black land section.

It received its name from the geological formations in the form of a subterranean stone wall, which crops out at the surface in numerous localities. Rockwall is known for this mysterious underground wall surrounding the county seat. Believed by some to be of artificial construction, it is generally accepted by geologists, however, as a sandstone dyke.

Rockwall is the smallest county in Texas, but is one of the most productive on a per-acre basis. It is situated on a high rolling prairie, with black waxy lime soil.

I have been in Rockwall a dozen times but have not seen any activity as far as digging around the wall is concerned so it is not a publicity stunt—just simply a freak stunt of nature. The native sons are not concerned about it, so it stands just as it is.

OLD songs that men have sung.

Can any reader supply the words and historical data on these songs? "Flying Cloud," "The Lawyer's Plea," and "The Captain With His Whiskers?"

Robert Frothingham would appreciate hearing from anyone familiar with these old-timers.

CROOKS invade philately.

Request:—In my collection I have a mint Togo stamp which is listed in Scott's catalog as No. 168. There is no price listed for a mint copy.

The Scott Stamp Company replied to my inquiry of this matter, that there are no mint copies of this particular stamp in existence.

Can you please advise me on this stamp? Could mine be a counterfeit?

—Herman Pentz, Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Dr. H. A. Davis:—Togo was formerly a German Colony in western Africa, bordering on the Gulf of Guinea. Following the World War, Togo was divided as mandates to Great Britain and France. The British area is attached to the Gold Coast Colony and the French area is now known as Togoland.

During the World War, under the French occupation, some of the former stamps issued by Germany for Togo were overprinted "Togo Occupation, France Anglaise" in three lines and used for postage. As only the occupation army used these stamps, only enough for their use was overprinted, consequently there are no unused specimens on the market.

The 25pf orange and black, No. 168, is valued in used condition at about $400.00.

Under the conditions mentioned above, there are no mint copies. The chances are that the copy you have has been fraudulently overprinted to defraud collectors.

SOUTH AMERICAN woods for fishing rods—

Request:—I should like to obtain some wood suitable for the manufacture of fishing rods. I have bought two or three lots of greenheart locally and it is absolutely worthless for the purpose, being much too brittle. I am wondering if you could perhaps tell me where I can get some greenheart of a suitable quality.

Since you know the tropics I thought that perhaps you could tell me to whom to write. I'd like to get either greenheart, bethabara, lancewood or degame or any other wood that you can recommend, and I would certainly appreciate hearing from you.

—H. W. Hussey, Shut Harbor, N. S.

Reply by Mr. William R. Barbour:—I am not surprised that greenheart has not proven satisfactory for you. The center of production is in British Guiana, and I suggest that you write Forest Officer, Georgetown, British Guiana, asking him if he can supply a suitable variety.

Bethabara is a trade name for woods of the genus *Tabebuia* of the *Bignoniaceae*, and is commonly applied to "Surinam Greenheart" of Dutch Guinna. (It is of an entirely different family from true greenheart). Two woods of the genus in British Guiana are called "washiba" and "hackia". The Forest Officer at Georgetown ought to be able to give you information and perhaps send samples.

Lancewood is of the genus *Oxandra* of the *Annonaceae*. It comes principally from Jamaica. Jamaica has no forest department, I believe, but you should have no trouble getting information. Degame is a wood of the genus *Calycophyllum* of the *Rubiaceae*. Much of it is exported from Cuba and I suggest you write the British Consul at Santiago or Havana.

I have for a long time believed that the outer rind of the black palm of Venezuela would make a fine wood for rods, handling it like bamboo, that is in strips glued together. The Indians use it for bows and get the same pulling strength with a much smaller cross section than with ordinary bow woods. I suggest you write the British Consul, Maracaibo, Venezuela, and try to get a sample. I would suggest having it shipped "in the round", though only the outer inch of the palm is hard enough to use.

THE opening battles in the war with Mexico were fought in Texas.

Request:—I am writing you to find out where I might get information about the Battle of Palo Alto.

I would like to know the line of retreat of the Mexicans to Resaca de la Palma and also the Battle of Resaca de la Palma. Date of battle: May 8, 9, 1846.

—A. W. McClendan, Harlinger, Texas.

Reply by Captain Glen R. Townsend:—The battles of Palo Alto, May 8, and Resaca de la Palma, May 9, 1846, were, as you know, the opening battles of the War with Mexico. At the small lake of Palo Alto, not far from the present site of Brownsville, Texas, about four thousand American troops commanded by General Zachary Taylor met and defeated a somewhat larger force of Mexicans, under Major-general Arista. The success of the Americans was due chiefly to the fact that their artillery was better handled than that of the Mexicans. Darkness, however, ended the battle before it could be fought to a decisive end. The Americans bivouaced on the battlefield, while the Mexican Army returned to a small hill nearby.

Instead of renewing the battle on the following day, the Mexicans withdrew about eight miles to the south and took up a new position behind an old river channel. Here, after some delay, the Americans renewed the attack about 2:00 P. M. on May 9th and succeeded in breaking the Mexican left (west) flank. They then drove the Mexicans across the Rio Grande.

Probably the best and most complete account of these battles is to be found in "The War with Mexico" by Justin H. Smith, (Vol. I) where maps and diagrams will enable you to get a better understanding of the fighting than the brief description I have given above. "The History of the Mexican War" by General Cadmus Wilcox contains accounts by both American and Mexican participants and will supply some details not found in Smith. Briefer accounts of the battles will be found in "American Campaigns" by Matthew F. Steele; and in "The History of the United States Army" by William A. Ganoe.

THE market for monk's-hood is good.

Request:—I have been wondering if there is any market for wild monk's-hood, or aconite. There are great quantities of it here in the Southwestern Alaskan Islands. Can you give me a list of houses that might buy aconite?

How and when should it be prepared for market?

Would ginseng do well here? I have been told that moss will grow only in acid soil and these islands are covered with a thick covering of several varieties of moss. Our only trees are alders. Would ginseng grow well planted among these? There is plenty of moisture as we have lots of rain and dew but the ground is not wet.

Where can seeds be purchased?

Why is wild ginseng preferred to cultivated? If it were planted then left alone, would it be the same as wild?

Are there other plants of commercial value that might be grown here? Our last frost is usually early April and first in early November, with the winter temperature seldom below 10 degrees above zero. The summers are mild, usually averaging about 60 to 65 degrees in the shade; it is not warm enough to grow corn, tomatoes, cucumbers, etc., here.

Will you please answer soon as we get mail only every two months, with no chance of answering the mail we receive until the next boat two months later.

—H. J. Taylor, Bendel Island, Alaska.

Reply by Mr. Paul M. Fink:—There is a market for wild monk's-hood and I believe you could sell all you could gather to either C. R. Graybeal & Sons, Roan Mountain, Tennessee, or the Indiana Botanic Gardens, Hammond, Indiana. Both roots and leaves are used, and should be prepared by drying slowly in the shade. In the Fall, after the plant has made its growth, but before frost, is the best time to gather both leaves and root.

I fear that ginseng would not do well in your situation, for I do not believe the temperature would be quite high enough in summer. Ginseng requires plenty of moisture, but a well drained soil, and much shade. Five years and more is required before one can make a crop, and quickest results can be obtained from roots. These, as well as seed, can be gotten from R. V. Surdam, Skaneateles, N. Y., and Oak Hill Ginseng Gardens, Viola, Iowa.

Since getting your inquiry I have talked with a local grower as to the difference between wild and cultivated "sang." He says that while the cultivated grows to a larger size, in his opinion it does not have the strength of the wild variety, and that he believes this is the reason for the difference in price. If planted in the woods, so that it could grow in the natural way, there should be little difference, but this would necessitate that it be planted very sparsely, and the task of protecting it from poachers would be great.

As I am unfamiliar with the climate and the kinds of vegetation best suited to your region, I cannot suggest any medicinal plants adapted to it. Maybe the Agricultural Department of the Territorial government could help you in this.

OF all things—an outboard motor in placer mining.

Request:—I have a ledge of red clay that will run fifty dollars per ton gold. This clay is very sticky and hard to dissolve. It seems to me that there should be some way of handling this stuff with a cement mixer or some kind of machine. It is a very fine gold mixed in the clay and hard to save. I have tried panning it but my hands give out in water. Old-timers all cuss this stuff and say you can't do anything with it. What do you say? I really believe I have got something here.

It is fifteen miles from water, with a road, so called, within six miles.

—Paul Finley, Los Angeles, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Victor Shaw:—If placer gold occurs in a formation where there is much clay, some form of puddling box must be used to soak up and dissolve the clay. Usually, when the formation is gravel mixed with clay, an ordinary box set at the head of a sluicing system is adequate for this purpose. The clay-gravel being shovelled into the puddling box and stirred and agitated with a square-ended shovel, or a broad paddle, until all clay is washed from the gravel and sand; all the while allowing your water to flow through this puddling box—that is, over its edges—to carry off the roily clay water. As I say, this method is usually sufficient.

In your case, where you seem to have all clay and little or no gravel and sand, I think you should try out another method.

Secure a barrel, and one of the heavy type like a wine barrel, and bore two inch holes through its sides in several places near the top and not below the halfway point. It would be advisable to tack a fine-mesh screen

inside over each hole, at that. Now, get an ordinary outboard motor engine with propellor—2-horse power is plenty, probably—and clamp it to the top rim of the barrel with, of course, the propellor inside and at least two to three inches off bottom.

Then shovel into the barrel some of your gold-bearing clay and fill the barrel with water and keep a stream of water running into it continually while operating the engine. The propellor thrashing at the bottom of the barrel, will keep the clay in suspension while water soaks it and disintegrates it and you can keep up the churning until it is all thoroughly dissolved and in suspension in the water.

Now, if your barrel is mounted securely just above your headbox of the sluicing system, and has a three to four inch hole at bottom with a plug hammered in tight—you can, when the churning is finished, withdraw the plug and allow the contents to wash down through your sluices, in a pulp in which the gold is probably freed of sticky clay. A bit of experimenting with this will determine how long the process must be continued to effect a total cleaning.

Now, the only way in sluicing gold to save the fine-grained metal called "flour gold", is to tack down on bottom of the boxes under the riffles burlap sacking, or blanketing, or common carpeting, or cocoa mats. Then place your riffles on top and nail them through ends from the sides of the box having them tightly on bottom on the carpeting. When you clean up the boxes (done when sand and gold bank up behind the riffles so gold is likely to wash over) then take up riffles starting at head box, after scooping up all gold, amalgam and sand behind each riffle; then take up the carpeting, wash it off into tub or other container, dry thoroughly, burn, and pan the ashes. Of course, when you are operating your sluice, you pour a little mercury behind each riffle to catch the gold, using care so it doesn't break into tiny balls or globules. Amount used depends on how much gold is in material.

All this gold-sand-amalgam is put into a goldpan and panned down closely. Then dry thoroughly, remove any iron with magnet and by blowing with breath, or a blow-box, place rest in a chamois skin or a buckskin bag and twist hard, to squeeze out excess mercury. This pasty hard ball of amalgam is then retorted to vaporize mercury, leaving a gold button in the retort (called a "retort") which is salable at banks and often to store keepers in mining towns—or to U. S. Assay Office, or Mint. Banks pay about $28 to $31—or $32 an ounce, as the gold is not yet refined and contains silver, and dirt with maybe some copper and iron. An Assay Office or Mint pays about the same when gold is delivered, but when they refine the gold they pay you the balance up to $35 an ounce for pure gold, plus any silver. Banks and merchants get this rebate cash, for handling your gold for you.

Now, if there's no water to work this method at the deposit, you will no doubt be forced to transport your material to a stream; but I feel certain that this type of puddling box will work successfully on your clay material. You may need to stir up the bottom from time to time with a pole, to make sure all clay is effected by the churn of the motor propellor, but a bit of care and watchfulness will get it all.

One of the most practical and informative books I know on every part of placering, from prospecting to working deposit, is one sold for $1.00, by Mine & Smelter Supply Co., Denver, Colo. This firm are headquarters also for all prospecting outfit and their goods are guaranteed as to quality and low costs. Get free catalogue and price list. Their book is titled: "ABC OF PLACER MINING," and is published by the Great Western Pub. Co., of Denver.

If you wish a little book covering completely everything regarding placer prospecting outfit, tools, foods, camp hints etc., with clear instructions on how to operate a goldpan, handle mercury in pan, rocker Longtom or sluice, how to build and use rocker and sluice with working drawings giving all dimensions, also how to use a retort, as well as how to handle a dry-washer on desert placers, send 35¢ for Bulletin No. 135, to Mines Dep't, University of Arizona, Tucson, Ariz. This pamphlet is the most complete on outfitting and use of placer tools that I know.

So, you can get all the data you'll need on placering for $1.35.

SOME technical talk on trailers, by trailer makers.

Request:—Five or six years ago I wrote to you asking your advice on the construction of a "folding" trailer. Your advice was not to attempt it. I would give anyone else the same advice today. Nevertheless, I did build a very successful "folding" trailer. The satisfactory results obtained I attribute to three factors: I am a graduate Mechanical Engineer with twenty years of manufacturing and designing experience. I have built a

Ponson type boat and two houses, five and seven rooms respectively, in my spare time, doing everything except excavating and plastering; and through business contacts there is available to me at reasonable cost a variety of materials which would be hard to equal any other place.

We've used the trailer for five years and find it convenient because it is light, and we can carry our twelve-foot boat on top of it. We will use it for at least a year or two longer.

But there comes a time when the outdoorsman craves a cabin-trailer; and I reached that point a year or so ago. Since then I've been designing. I don't know how many trailers have come off of my drawing board to date. Some were discarded before being completed, other designs were discarded when their beauty was dimmed by the brilliance of a new "idea."

One idea that has periodically sprung into prominence in my mind for the past two years is the use of a third wheel of the caster type under the front end. Just recently I noticed that one of the factory-made jobs has adopted this idea. It undoubtedly has the three advantages of keeping all weight off the car, eliminating the tendency for the rear end of the trailer to whip from side to side since the main axle would be set away back, and eliminates the necessity of legs. On the other hand, a caster might tend to throw the car from side to side. Also the caster would have to be loaded sufficiently to prevent "tramping." Both of these tendencies would be reduced proportionately by locating the caster, or better still two casters, three or four feet behind the front end of the trailer. The commercial job I mentioned had the caster in front of the trailer where it would create the greatest tendency to throw the car sideways. Two casters would be better than one as they would "track" on gravel roads, and as each would help to overcome the side throw caused by the other. All in all what do you think of the idea and of the theories set forth above?

The trailer, which is in the ascendency on my drafting board at the present time, embodies an entirely new principle of design which will afford structural simplicity and extreme lightness, less than a thousand pounds net, for an eighteen foot job complete. This is so light I may not use a caster or casters, in which case the following characteristics will obtain:

1,800 lbs.—Gross Weight
18′—Body, 6′4″ High (Inside)
10′6″—From Front to Axle
7′6″—From Rear to Axle
4′—Tongue
215 lbs.—On car
1,585 lbs.—On Trailer Wheels

What do you think of these factors? Moving the wheels six inches toward the front would improve the interior arrangement but would increase the rear-end overhang to eight feet. This might have a considerable tendency to increase the side-whip. Theoretically the heavy portion of the body and the heavy equipment should be located directly above the axle and springs, while only the lightest portions should be placed in the extreme ends, but this ideal loading must be pitched overboard in favor of convenient living quarters. Do you think an eight foot rear-end overhang would be too much?

Do you know of a technical book on the subject of trailer design and construction, something of a true engineering nature?

A few weeks ago I visited the Outdoor Show in Chicago. While there I put in quite a lot of time examining factory-built trailers, "designed by automotive engineers with years of experience." Frankly, as an engineer, I was astounded at the lack of application of engineering principles. In some cases not even good sense was used, such as, laying a wooden supporting member flat instead of edgewise which would have given twice the strength and permitted the use of a member one-third lighter. Not only that, but it would have eliminated the necessity of making four offset-bends in each of six angle irons, a total of twenty-four bends; and, believe me, bending angle iron costs money. Incidentally, the angles were at least twice, maybe three times, as heavy as necessary. This "engineer" evidently couldn't calculate simple stresses. In one $1,800.00 job they had an enameled, cast-iron, wash bowl, about 5″x9″ set in a place that would easily have accommodated a bowl of serviceable size which, if made of sheet metal, stainless steel, aluminum, monel metal, or chromium-plated copper would have weighed no more than the cast-iron bowl. These are only a few of the glaring errors I noticed. I've "sort-of" lost faith in these "automotive engineers with years of experience."

Any suggestions or comments you may care to offer will be greatly appreciated.

—S. T. N., Chicago, Ill.

Reply by Major Charles G. Percival:—It made me feel fine to read your letter, because I agree with you on many of the things you

say.

As for the third wheel question—just now it is not practicable. I spent nine months on the road in a Palace Coach. They use a third wheel on two models and two different designs, so does Silver Dome, etc. But no trailer under eighteen feet needs a third wheel if it is designed right. The third wheel just doesn't work out right, in backing; in soft sand and dirt, they fold up.

I've watched every trailer of every make and some of no make at all, and I'm not sold on a third wheel yet. The four wheel trailer is out. Practical experience with the Army in France carrying ammunition has shown me that the four wheel trailer is only good for a slow moving farm job and will whip at high speeds.

One trailer manufacturer puts his hitch in the rumble seat of the tow car, in the space occupied by two passengers, and saves their weight, distributing its load off the rear axle. Another outfit tried to hitch into the rear seating space of a sedan model and flopped. So if you want a perfect trailer, make it any length you want, put your two wheels back as far as you want, and then tow with a car with a roadster body and put your hitch where the rear seat or three passenger space of the sedan would normally be. When you put three hundred and fifty to five hundred pounds on the rear axle of a five passenger car you begin to get into trouble, also whipping.

I've pulled a trailer half a million miles, built scores, visited, this year, fifty-eight factories, and read I don't know how many books, but one thing I am very sure of, and that is that it's time the car manufacturers gave a little thought to trailers when designing their cars and made it more practicable for us to attach a hitch. It's about time they put out an axle that would stand up under a three thousand pound trailer tow.

SUNDAY ISLAND, a seeming South Sea paradise, has only a record of suffering and failure.

Request:—I should appreciate your giving me information concerning Raoul (Sunday) Island in the Kermadecs. I am especially desirous of knowing whether land is available for homesteading or sale; what the water supply is; amount and type of vegetation thereon.

—Franklin R. Bristol, Columbia, Mo.

Reply by Mr. William McCreadie:—I had better tell you briefly the history of the Kermadecs as far as I know it. Sunday Island is far and away the largest of the group having an area of seventy-two hundred acres. The next largest being Macauley Island of seven hundred and sixty-four acres. The islands are volcanic and there have been bad earthquakes. There is also thermal activity. The rainfall is plentiful and the climate mild and pleasant, but the history of Sunday is so far a record of failure. It is thickly wooded and fertile. There are four interior lagoons, at least one of which contains fresh water which otherwise is very scarce. Sunday is reported to be able to carry a large population.

I hear that while two men from New Zealand have lived there since 1934 other parties of eight or nine New Zealand and four Australian families propose to go to live there. Transport is next to nil, only a very stray vessel ever calling, but if settlers want to live there it is certain that supply ships would call. In 1837 the first legitimate settlement took place. Two men with Samoan wives lived there and some children were born, they planted bananas, caught fish, and grew potatoes, etc. In 1842 Baker (one of them) brought goats from Samoa and they are now very numerous. Then Reid left Baker and owing to earthquakes Baker became alarmed and cleared out. In 1850 two Americans and their wives stayed for two years. Then a slaver landed two hundred Tukerau natives ill with sort of typhoid and all died ashore. In 1869 another earthquake drove out another settlement. In 1878 a man named Bell brought sixteen Nuie natives and tried to make a permanent settlement but owing to the whalers decreasing in number he sent the natives home and stayed on for many years and after New Zealand had formally annexed the group he was granted a block of two hundred and seventy-five acres in the center of the island. An old man named Bell was there when *H.M.S. Tutanekai* called in 1914 but the family soon left for New Zealand and for fifteen years the island was uninhabited. In 1934 as I said three men went to settle but one got tetanus and died. The other two refused to leave. They say they hope to grow plenty of foodstuffs and maintain themselves with their own produce. That's about all I can tell you. If you want further particulars you might write to the further particulars, write to the Minister for External Affairs, Wellington, N. Z.

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Boxing—CAPT. JEAN V. GROMBACH, 113 W. 57th St., N. Y. C.

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Coins: *and medals*—HOWLAND WOOD, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th St., N. Y. C.

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Motorcycling—*regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, 32 Mason Terr., Brookline, Mass.

Mountain Climbing—THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 1632 So. Hayworth Av., Los Angeles, Calif.

Old Songs—ROBERT FROTHINGHAM, 995 Pine St., San Francisco, Calif.

Old-Time Sailoring—CHAS. H. HALL, 446 Ocean Av., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *foreign and American*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, R. F. D. No. 3, Box 69, Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *foreign and American makes; wing shooting*—JOHN B. THOMPSON, care of *Adventure.*

★**Skiing and Snowshoeing**—W. H. PRICE, 3436 Mance St., Montreal, Quebec.

Small Boating: *skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

Stamps—DR. H. A. DAVIS, The American Philatelic Society, 3421 Colfax Av., Denver, Colo.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y. C.

Swords: *spears, pole arms and armor*—CAPT. R. E. GARDNER, 1354 N. 4th St., Columbus, Ohio.

Tournament Fly and Bait Casting—H. B. STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, 125 Lambert Rd., Jenkintown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—CHARLES B. CRANFORD, School of Education, New York University, Washington Square, New York, N. Y.

Yachting—A. R. KNAUER, 2722 E. 75th Pl., Chicago, Ill.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American; north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture; pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Automobiles and Aircraft Engines: *design, operation and maintenance*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Aviation: *airplanes, airships, airways and landing fields, contests, aero clubs, insurance, laws, licenses, operating data, schools, foreign activities, publications, parachutes, gliders*—MAJOR FALK HARMEL, 709 Longfellow St., Washington, D. C.

Big Game Hunting: *guides and equipment*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

Entomology: *insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Pa.

Ethnology: (*Eskimo*)—VICTOR SHAW, 20th & W. Garfield Sts., Seattle, Wash.

Forestry: *in the United States; national forests of the Rocky Mountain States*—ERNEST W. SHAW, South Carver, Mass.

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Motor Vehicles: *operation, legislative restrictions and traffic*—EDMUND B. NEIL, care of *Adventure.*

Ornithology: *birds; their habits and distribution*—DAVIS QUINN, 3508 Kings College Pl., Bronx, N. Y.

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Wildcrafting and Trapping — RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Inglewood, Calif.

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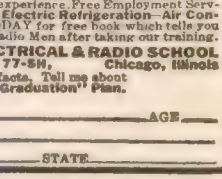

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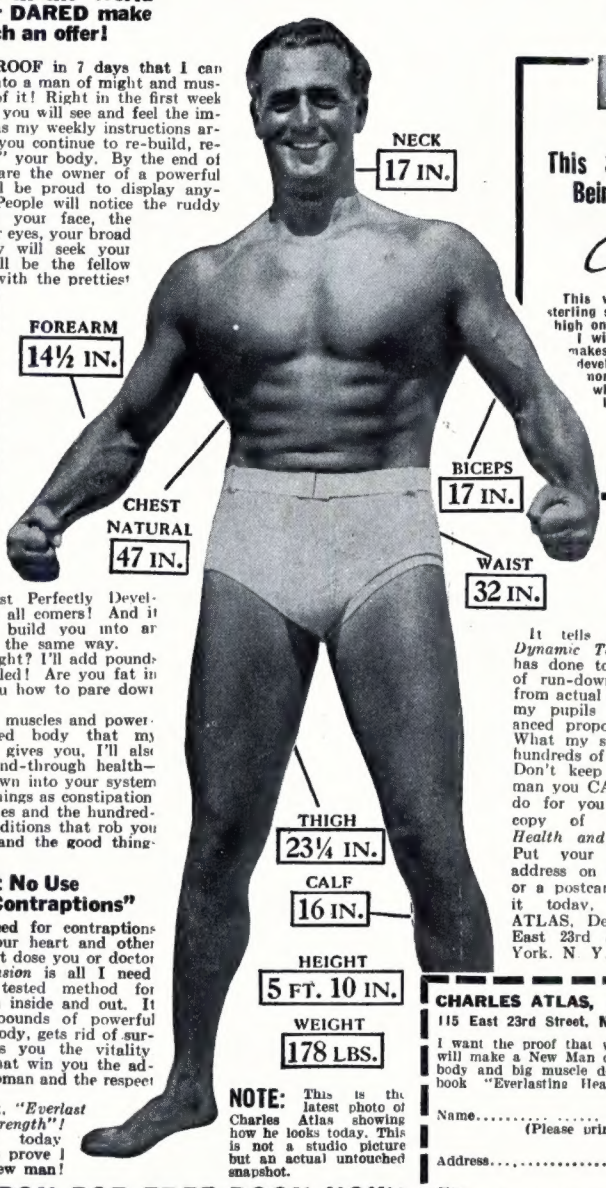
I haven't any need for contraptions that may strain your heart and other vital organs. I don't dose you or doctor you. *Dynamic Tension* is all I need. It's the natural, tested method for developing real men inside and out. It distributes added pounds of powerful muscles over your body, gets rid of surplus fat, and gives you the vitality strength and pep that win you the admiration of every woman and the respect of any man.

Get my free book, *"Everlasting Health and Strength"!* Mail my coupon today. Gamble a stamp to prove I can make YOU a new man!



NOTE: This is the latest photo of Charles Atlas showing how he looks today. This is not a studio picture but an actual untouched snapshot.

This Sterling Silver Cup Being Given Away by

Charles Atlas

This valuable cup, made of solid sterling silver, stands about 14 inches high on a black mahogany base. I will award it to my pupil who makes the most improvement on his development within the next three months. Therefore, no matter what your measurements may be now, you have an equal chance to win this cup for permanent possession — and with YOUR name engraved on it! Get my free book by mailing coupon below.

48-PAGE BOOK FREE

It tells you all about my special *Dynamic Tension* method, and what it has done to make big-muscled men out of run-down specimens. It shows you, from actual photos, how I have developed my pupils to the same perfectly balanced proportions of my own physique. What my system did for me and these hundreds of others it can do for you too. Don't keep on being only half of the man you CAN be! Find out what I can do for you. Where shall I send your copy of *"Everlasting Health and Strength"?* Put your name and address on the coupon, or a postcard, and mail it today. CHARLES ATLAS, Dept 83Z, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

MAIL COUPON FOR FREE BOOK NOW!

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 83Z.
115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.

I want the proof that your system of **Dynamic Tension** will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book "Everlasting Health and Strength."

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SPRINGBOARD ACE. Jane Fauntz Manske says: "When I smoke Camels at mealtimes and after, I find that my digestion runs more smoothly." The best meal digests easier when you smoke Camels.

THREE-TIME OLYMPIC WINNER in the high dive. Dorothy Poynton Hill says: "I prefer Camels because they don't get on my nerves. And, like so many other women, I like Camel's flavor."

WHAT SOME OF AMERICA'S AQUATIC STARS SAY ABOUT SMOKING...

(*Left*) **LENORE KIGHT WINGARD.** She has broken 7 World's Records—16 Nat'l Records—in speed swimming. Lenore comments on smoking: "Camels are certainly mild. They never jangle my nerves."

MISS GLORIA WHEEDEN says: "I always think of smoking Camels and eating as going together."

(*Right*) **HAROLD "DUTCH" SMITH,** who holds Olympic diving championships, says: "I've found great pleasure in Camels. I long ago found Camels restore my energy after a strenuous meet."

(*Left*) **PETE DESJARDINS** — internationally famous diver—speaking: "Divers like a *mild* cigarette that doesn't upset nerves. That's why I prefer Camels."

MILLIONS MORE FOR COSTLIER TOBACCOS!

Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS — Turkish and Domestic — than any other popular brand

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FOR DIGESTION'S SAKE — SMOKE CAMELS